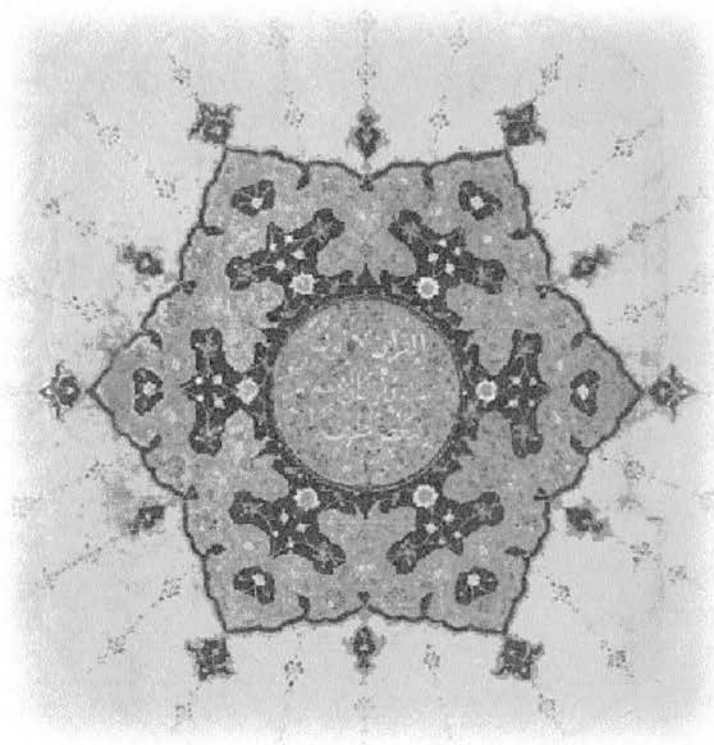
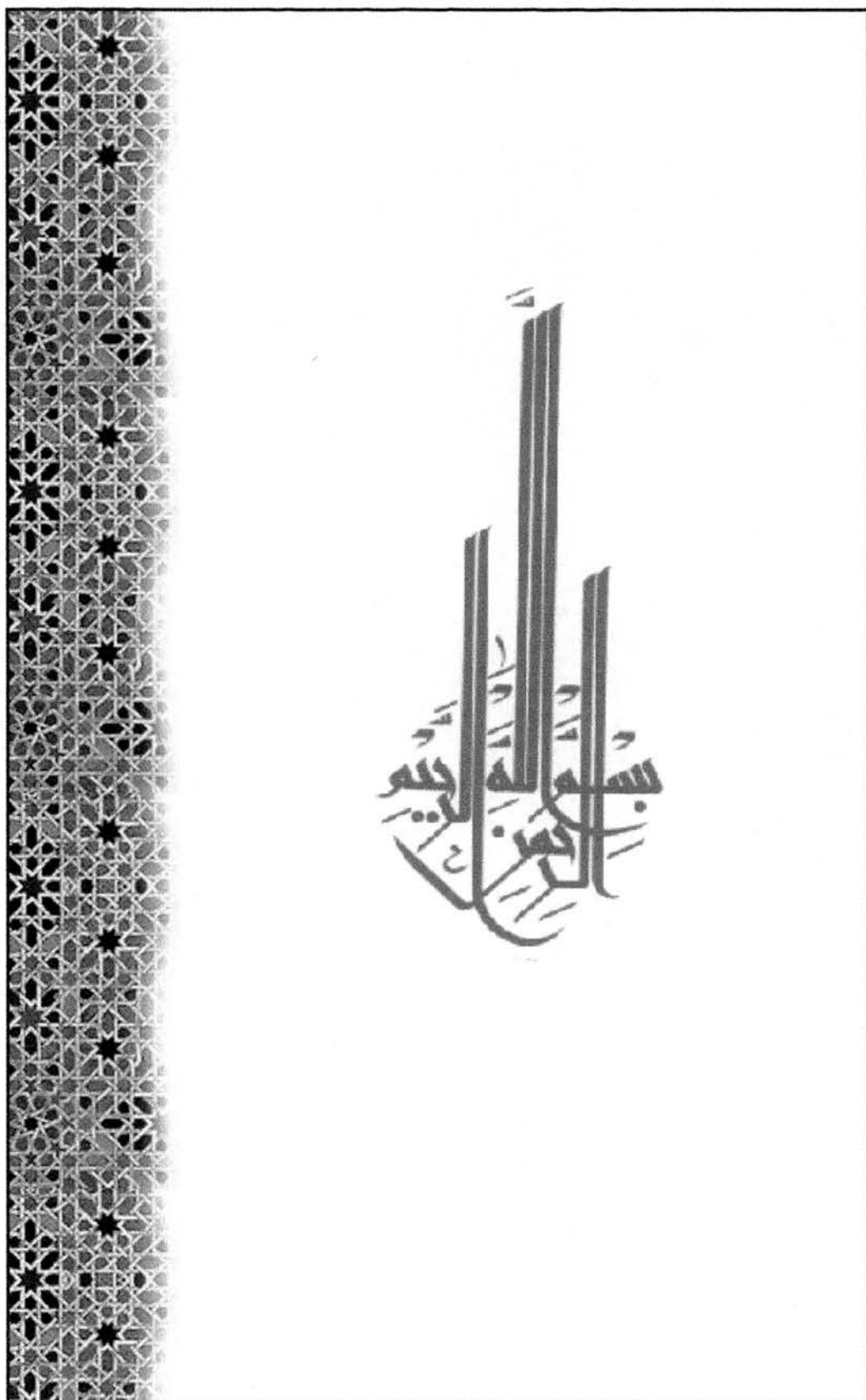


Military Organization
under the
Early 'Abbāsiḍ Caliphate
(AH 132-228 / AD 750-843)



By Rakan Al-Mutairi, October 2002

*Thesis Presented for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies
Faculty of Arts, University of Edinburgh*



Declaration

No portion of the work contained in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

.....24.2.03..... (Date)

Abstract

The aim of this study is to shed light on the military organization during the first century of the ‘Abbāsid caliphate (AH 132-228 / AD 750-843). It is divided into an Introduction, seven chapters, and a Conclusion.

The Introduction provides a review of the method and plan that are followed in the study.

The first chapter deals with the elements that constituted the early ‘Abbāsid armies. It traces their introduction, development, and their most common characteristics.

The second chapter is concerned with the *Dīwān al-Jund*. First, it gives a review of the institution of the *Dīwān* from its inception to the end of the Umayyad Caliphate. Next, it traces the changes that occurred to the *Dīwān* under the early ‘Abbāsids, including the method of enlisting the soldiers into the *Dīwān* and distributing their pay, and the development in the systems of ‘*aṭā*’ and *arzāq*. It also discusses the conditions of enlistment in the *Dīwān* under the early ‘Abbāsids, the rate of pay of the ‘Abbāsid troops, and the size of the ‘Abbāsid army.

The third chapter is concerned with the military units and support services employed by ‘Abbāsid armies. It provides details about their development, their special role, and the equipment used by each of them.

The fourth chapter is devoted to the military administration. It provides information on means of military communication, army supplies and provisioning, levies, volunteers, and other supernumerary fighters, exchange of captives, and army command and ranks.

The fifth chapter deals with the mobilization and tactics followed by the ‘Abbāsīd forces during the march, encampment, battle, and during the summer and winter raids.

The sixth chapter provides details about Muslim sea warfare under the early ‘Abbāsīds. It discusses the ‘Abbāsīds’ naval power in the Mediterranean as well as in the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. Also, it provides a description of the ‘Abbāsīds’ naval organization, including dockyards and naval bases, warships and naval tactics, the crew of the warship, and the responsibilities of the commander of the fleet.

The seventh chapter traces the ‘Abbāsīd military bases and their most distinctive martial characteristics.

Finally, the Conclusion states some of the main outcomes of the research.

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THANKS BE TO ALLAH, ABOVE ALL OTHERS, FOR AIDING ME THROUGHOUT MY LIFE.

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Scheme of Transliteration

The transliteration of Arabic words is according to the following alphabetical substitution:

Table 1: CONSONANTS

أ	' (Not shown initially)	ض	ḍ
ب	B	ط	ṭ
ت	T	ظ	ẓ
ث	Th	ع	‘
ج	J	غ	gh
ح	Ḥ	ف	f
خ	Kh	ق	q
د	D	ك	k
ذ	Dh	ل	l
ر	R	م	m
ز	Z	ن	n
س	S	هـ	h
ش	Sh	و	w
ص	Ṣ	ي	y
ة	h (ثلاثة: <i>thalāthah</i>) except when <i>muḍāf</i> , then t (ثلاثة أعلام: <i>thalāthatu aqlām</i>)		

Table 2: VOWELS & DIPHTHONGS

Short Vowels		Long Vowels		Diphthongs	
— (fatḥah)	A	أَ / إَ	Ā (كتاب: <i>kitāb</i>)	أَو	aw (أولي: <i>awlā</i>)
‘ — (ḍammah)	U	أُ / أُ	ū (كتبو: <i>katabū</i>)	أَي	ay (غيب: <i>ghayb</i>)
— (kasrah)	I	إِ / يِ	ī (مفتي: <i>muftī</i>)		

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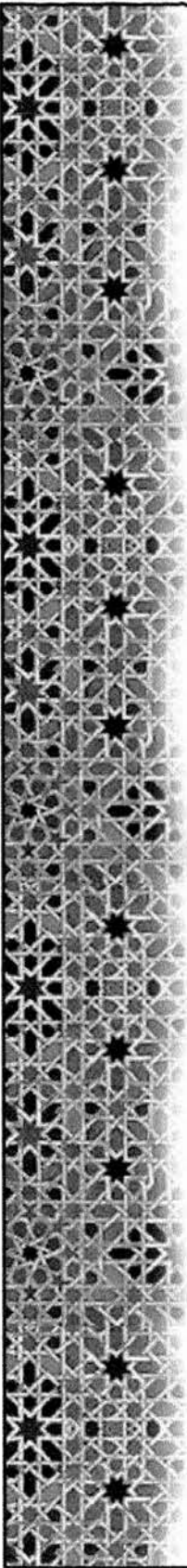
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Introduction

The importance of studying the military history of the early 'Abbāsid Caliphate springs from the fact that it marked a turning point in the history of Muslim armies. This is due to fact that the early 'Abbāsids abandoned many customary practices relating to the organization of the army and introduced fundamentally new systems, whether in regard to the men employed in the army, the way Muslim fighters were recruited and organized, or even the way they planned their cities and settled troops in them.

It is not intended that this study should provide a history of war under the early 'Abbāsid Caliphate. Instead, it focuses primarily on studying aspects of military organization within the historical context. It should further be noted that it is not our intention to produce a comparison between the military organizations under the early 'Abbāsids and that which preceded it during the early days of Islam and the Umayyad Caliphate. However, for the sake of a better understanding of the roots of the 'Abbāsid military organizations and in order to clarify the extent of change that occurred during the period of study, brief reviews of some aspects of the military organizations during the early days of Islam and the Umayyads are included as deemed relevant.

Islamic military organization is a very broad subject to study. It has been, and still is, the focus of interest of many western Orientalists and Arab scholars. A number of books and articles have been published on different aspects of Islamic military organization, covering, for example, warfare tactics, military administration, arms, the arts of cavalry training, and military technology. It seems, however, that it is the early days of Islam, and also the Ayyubid, and Mamluk periods that have received

most attention in these works. Meanwhile, early ‘Abbāsid military organization, especially during the period covered by the present study (132-228/750-843), has received comparatively less attention. This, however, should not obscure the fact that, although their primary purpose has been to make clearer some political, economic, or social point, many of the modern historians interested in the early ‘Abbāsid Caliphate have explored and discussed, to a varying extent, some very important particular aspects of early ‘Abbāsid military organization. Among those whose contributions have been frequently cited in this study are M. A. Shaban, D. Ayalon, C. E. Bosworth, J. Lassner, F. Omar, H. Kennedy, M. Sharon, M. Ahsan, and F. Amabe.

One of the main difficulties facing the researcher of early ‘Abbāsid military history, particularly the organizational aspects, is the fact that although the first century of ‘Abbāsid rule produced an abundance of treatises dealing with different aspects of Islamic warfare and matters related to it, most of these are now lost. Even those which have survived - such as part of *K. al-Ḥiyal* of al-Harthamī al-Sha‘rānī, the companion of Caliph al-Ma’mūn, or other treatises found as chapters in some books on jurisprudence (*fiqh*) or finance, such as *K. al-Āthār* and *K. al-Kharāj* by Abū Yūsuf (d. 182/798), or *K. al-Siyar al-Kabīr* by al-Shaybānī (d. 189/804) - cannot be relied on exclusively to draw a genuine description of the early ‘Abbāsid military organization. This is first and foremost because most of the information in these treatises reflects only an idealistic view of the art of war, its law, its administration, as well as mentioning some conventional information on arms, horsemanship, and military tactics. In fact, many details of the information found in these works do not

derive so much from the reality of the time their authors lived so much as they do from theoretical manuals on the art of war. This fact leaves the researcher no other alternative except to widen the scope of the search to include all available historical and literature writings dating to the first century of the ‘Abbāsīd rule.

Despite the evident importance of the brief and fragment information relating to the early ‘Abbāsīd army that can be found in the writings of a few contemporary authors such as Ibn al-Muqaffa’ (d. 138/756), Ibn Khayyāṭ (d. 240/854), al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/868), such information is still insufficient to discover all the organizational aspects of the ‘Abbāsīd army. This fact forces the researcher to extend his search wider to include all sorts of writings dating from later centuries. The vast bulk of information about the first century of the ‘Abbāsīd rule is found in the historical and literature works produced in the late third, fourth, and fifth AH (ninth, tenth and eleventh AD) by renowned historians such as al-Balādhurī (d. 279/892), Dīnawarī (d. 282/895), al-Ya‘qūbī (d. 284/897), al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/922), and al-Mas‘ūdī (d. 346/957). However, even with these documents, the information on military affairs only comes in the form of brief fragments of information mentioning names, or events from the period of this study. This fact places the researcher in a rather difficult situation. The difficulty derives both from the paucity of information in the sources and from the long time needed to discover them by searching through various categories of literature. Moreover, what complicates the situation even further is the fact that the brief fragments of information that are available about a specific military organizational aspect are not always sufficient to construct a comprehensive picture, as further important clues appear still to be missing. As one

means of reconstructing the missing details, we are sometimes forced to compare the fragmentary information available of the period of study with that similar information concerning the same matter from earlier and latter periods in order to draw a reasonable conclusion regarding the matter being discussed.

This study is divided into seven chapters, followed by the Conclusion, and an Arabic-English Glossary.

Chapter One discusses the introduction, development, and the most notable characteristic of the elements that composed the early ‘Abbāsīd armies. It is divided into six sections, each of which deals with one element of the ‘Abbāsīd forces: the Khurāsānīs, the *Abnā’*, the Arabs, the *Mawālī*, the Turks, and finally some minor military elements.

Chapter Two is concerned with the *Dīwān al-Jund*. It is divided into two parts. The aim in the first is to furnish a review of the institution of the *Dīwān al-Jund* and the systems of *aṭā’* and *arzāq* from their inception to the end of the Umayyad Caliphate. The second part examines the *Dīwān al-Jund* under the early ‘Abbāsīds when fundamental initiatives were introduced regarding many of its organizational procedures, including the method of enlisting the soldiers into the *Dīwān*. It also discusses the procedures employed in distributing the soldiers’ pay, developments in the system of *aṭā’* and *arzāq*, the conditions of enrolment into the *Dīwān*, the rate of the pay of the ‘Abbāsīd troops, and some details about the size of the ‘Abbāsīd army.

Chapter Three provides details about the most distinguished personnel of the early ‘Abbāsīd military units, including the cavalry, infantry, archers, siege-engineers,

pioneer and labour corps, and army police force. It also discusses the non-combatant groups who supported the army from the outset of the march up to the conclusion of the fighting and the division of booty.

Chapter Four deals with military administration. It provides information relating to military communication, the army supplies and provisioning system, and the use of levies, volunteers and other supernumerary fighters in the army. Within the context of this chapter, the issues involved in exchanging captives, and the army command and ranks are also discussed.

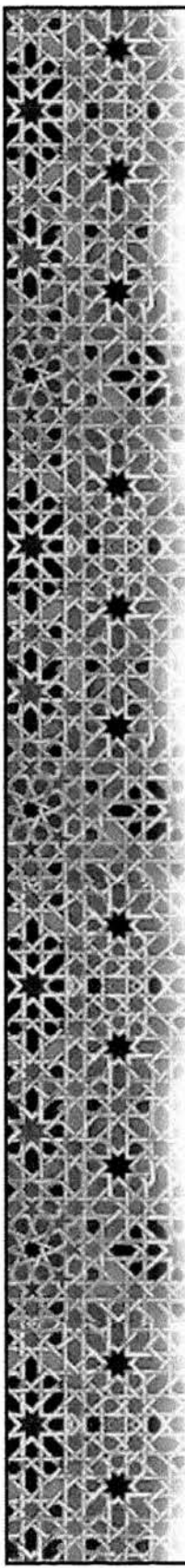
Chapter Five contains details about the mobilization and military tactics employed by the early ‘Abbāsid armies during the march, encampment, and in the battlefield. It also provides information regarding the summer and winter raids, considering their timing, geographical location, their extent, and the purpose of these seasonal raids.

Chapter Six provides details about Muslim sea warfare under the early ‘Abbāsids. It discusses the ‘Abbāsid naval power in the Mediterranean as well as in the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, reviewing the measures that the early ‘Abbāsid Caliphs took to counter the naval challenges of their enemies in these two maritime regions. In addition, it provides a description of the ‘Abbāsid naval organization, including dockyards and naval bases, warships and naval tactics, and, finally, the crew of the warship and the responsibilities of the commander of the fleet.

Chapter Seven deals with the ‘Abbāsid military bases. It provides information regarding military objectives, the defence systems, and the pattern of military

settlement that the early ‘Abbāsids applied in their capitals as well as in their frontier strongholds (*thughūr*).

In the **Conclusion** the most important outcomes reached by the study are summarised. Finally, the **Glossary** provides brief definitions of Arabic terms used throughout the text.



Chapter I

The Composition of the 'Abbāsiḍ Army

Introduction

One of the distinctive features of the Muslim armies during the early days of Islam and the Umayyad Caliphate was their being composed almost exclusively of Arab tribesmen. Although some non-Arab groups from amongst the people of the conquered lands such as Persians, Berbers, Turks, or Sindīs had joined Muslim armies, nonetheless neither their number nor their role amounted to those of the Arabs, who continued to the end of the Umayyad Caliphate to form the backbone of Muslim armies. Arab dominance in the army, however, was broken with the succession of the 'Abbāsids to power, as their armies came to include a variety of ethnic groups from different regional and cultural backgrounds. Although the first century of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate began with an army made up primarily of Arab tribesmen, along with a considerable number of Muslim Iranians, it ended with a Mamluk army, whose members were slaves bought or brought from slave centres in Baghdad and Central Asia. In this chapter we will describe the introduction, development, and most salient characteristics of the elements that composed the early 'Abbāsīd armies. For convenience, this chapter is divided into six sections, each of which deals with one element of the 'Abbāsīd forces: the Khurāsānīs, the *abnā'*, the Arabs, the *mawālī*, the Turks, and, finally, some minor military elements.

1.1 The Khurāsānīs

During the formative years of their Caliphate, the 'Abbāsids relied heavily on a professional fighting force composed almost exclusively of a revolutionary army

recruited in Khurāsān. Speaking of the 'Abbāsīd revolution, sources tend to argue that it was a revolution that was carefully planned. From the inception of their *da'wah* (propaganda), the 'Abbāsīd leadership seemed to recognize the fact that a successful revolt would have to begin in a province where a large proportion of the population felt for one reason or another discontent with the Umayyad rule. Despite the large discontented community in Iraq, and in particular in Kūfah, where a considerable number of the people were politically primed with Shi'ite ideas, especially the legitimacy of *Ahl al-Bayt* to rule, the 'Abbāsīds did not wish to make it the centre of their *da'wah*. This was because the 'Abbāsīds were fully aware that the tendency of its people was always in favour of the 'Alid family, in which it would be difficult for them to find much support among these people for their claim to rule after the revolution succeeded.¹ Additionally, Kūfah, like many other hotbeds of unrest such as the cities of Baṣrah and Makkah, was under close observation by the Umayyads. Hence, it would be extremely difficult for any new revolt to operate without being noticed. Most important, however, was the fact that the Kūfites had proven time after time that they were the sort of people who never fulfilled their promises in supporting their revolutionary leaders when put to the test in time of crisis.² Looking for an alternative to Iraq, the 'Abbāsīds found their long-cherished base of operations in Khurāsān. The province was an ideal arena for their activities. It was far from the centre of the Umayyad government, which meant that the government surveillance there was relatively weaker than in other provinces,

¹ *Akhhbār al-'Abbās wa Waladīh*, pp. 193-4; al-Tha'ālibī, *Laṭā'if al-Ma'ārif*, p. 169.

especially since Khurāsān had never previously been identified with any of the main political groups that strove for power. Moreover, it had a large discontented population, not only amongst the local *mawālī*, but also amongst the large Arab community who was transplanted into the region and who had different reasons to feel dissatisfied with the Umayyads and their representatives there.³

During the period of clandestine propaganda (99-129/718-747) and the years of the open revolt which followed (129-132/747-750), the 'Abbāsīd *da'wah* in Khurāsān succeeded in attracting into its ranks every discontented element regardless of their political, ideological, or self-interested motivation. However, contrary to the assumptions of late nineteenth-and early twentieth-century historians led by Van Vloten and Wellhausen, who interpreted the 'Abbāsīd revolution as a mass Iranian uprising against the Arab ruling class and their domination, prevailing scholarly opinion in recent times stresses the mixed character of the revolutionary troops that lifted the 'Abbāsīds to power.⁴ Thus, in addition, to the Arab elements, who formed the backbone of the revolutionary forces, there were a considerable number of local *mawālī* (Iranians) and even slaves who found in the Abbāsīd revolution the vehicle for their emancipation.

²*Akhhbār*, pp. 193, 230; Sharon, 'Abbāsīd Revolution, p. 140.

³Kennedy, *Abbasid Caliphate*, pp. 37, 43; Sharon, *Black Banners*, p. 53.

⁴For a full review of the different views of modern historians about the identity of the 'Abbāsīd revolutionary forces, see Shaban, 'Abbāsīd Revolution, pp. 155-7; Omar, 'Abbāsīd Caliphate, pp. 57-8; Lassner, *Shaping*, pp. 3-5; Fukuzo, 'Abbāsīd Autocracy, pp. 31-2.

The process of the Arab settlement in Khurāsān can be dated as early as the time of its conquest in 31/652 by 'Abdallāh b. 'Āmir, the governor of Baṣrah, during the reign of Caliph 'Uthmān b. 'Affān.⁵ With the collapse of the Sassanian armies in Iraq and in the western parts of Iran, the Arabs seemed to face no real resistance in establishing their authority over the eastern part of Sassanian Khurāsān. Unlike the west, which was under the direct control of the Sassanian central authority, the eastern provinces consisted of many small and highly independent principalities, many of which were ruled by local Iranian lords who in the past had not accepted the Sassanian mastery.⁶ Finding it pointless, many of the local lords, such as those in Nīshāpūr, Nasā, Abīward, Ṭūs, Harāt, and Marw, choose to make peace treaties with the new ruler. Under the terms of these treaties, the Arabs agreed to leave those lords in control of their own affairs, especially financial administration, as well as to make no efforts to convert the local people to Islam. In return, the local lords would pay tribute to the Arabs and would allow Arab immigrants to settle in their villages.⁷ Nevertheless, the situation in Khurāsān did not remain as peaceful as the Arabs had expected. Soon after the return of the bulk of the conquering army, under the command of 'Abdallāh b. 'Āmir, to Iraq in 132/653, a widespread insurrection broke out in Khurāsān, exploiting the opportunity presented by the small garrison that the

⁵Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 499; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 4, p. 300; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 2, p. 401; Qudāmāh, *Kharāj*, p. 400.

⁶Kennedy, *Abbasid Caliphate*, p. 36; Shaban, *'Abbāsīd Revolution*, pp. 9-11.

⁷Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 502; Qudāmāh, *Kharāj*, p. 402; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 6, pp. 310-1; Shaban, *'Abbāsīd Revolution*, pp. 20-1; Kennedy, *Abbasid Caliphate*, pp. 36-7.

Arabs had left behind, estimated to number some 4,000 men.⁸ Although 'Abdallāh b. 'Amir was able to return in 133/653 and to re-establish Arab authority in the region, this did not restrain the ambition of many of the local lords to revoke the treaties, especially during the civil war between 'Alī and Mu'āwiyah when the Arabs were fully preoccupied with their internal affairs.⁹

With the end of the civil war and the succession of the Umayyads to power in 41/661, the central government in Damascus had to pay attention to Khurāsān. To affirm Muslim foothold in the region, the Umayyads adopted a complex two-pronged plan. First, they determined to resume the conquest operations to subjugate not only cities and areas within Khurāsān but, more important, in Sīstan, which had played in the past a vital role in agitating the disturbances in the east. Second, they decided to settle permanently a substantial number of Arab tribesmen in Khurāsān to act as a security force and provide the manpower needed for further expansion.¹⁰ However, while the Umayyads were cautious not to dissipate their Syrian forces in filling the security gap in Khurāsān, they found ideally suited to their needs the Arab tribesmen of Iraq and in particular those living within the great garrison cities of Kūfah and Baṣrah. In addition, to reduce the overcrowding in these cities, the Umayyads found it also a good opportunity to drain the two cities of many of their Arab manpower

⁸Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 4, p. 314; Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Tārīkh*, p. 123; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 3, p. 28; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 7, p. 61.

⁹Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 4, pp. 557-8; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 505-6; Shaban, *'Abbāsid Revolution*, p. 26.

¹⁰Shaban, *'Abbāsid Revolution*, pp. 28, 32.

who were politically discontented with the Umayyad rule.¹¹ Thus, as part of a long demilitarization process, the Umayyads sought from 51/671 onward to send in gradual waves substantial numbers of Kūfan and Baṣran Arab tribesmen to Khurāsān not only to serve, but also to settle there permanently.¹²

In Khurāsān, many of the early Iraqi Arab immigrants settled in various cities including Marw, Ṭūs, Nīshāpūr, Balkh, Marw al-Rūdh, Ṭāliqān, and Harāt.¹³ In course of time, however, with the relative stability in Khurāsān, many of these Arab settlers started to abstain from taking part in the military expeditions. Instead, they started to acquire lands and practise trade. Moreover, their long stay in close proximity with the local population helped the process of assimilation between the two. In Khurāsān, they mingled with the native Iranian population, married among them, adopted many of their customs, and even spoke Persian among themselves in addition to Arabic.¹⁴ While the feeling of discontent among these Arab settlers

¹¹Kennedy, *Abbasid Caliphate*, p. 36.

¹²Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 507; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 5, p. 286; vol. 6, pp. 326-7, 335, 484; vol. 7, p. 79; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 3, p. 259; vol. 4, pp. 193, 399. The demilitarization of the cities of Baṣrah and Kūfah, which started in 51/671 with the transfer of 50,000 families, half from Baṣrah and the other half from Kūfah, to settle in Khurāsān, seems to have been completed in 83/702 with the failure of 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. al-Ash'ath's revolt and the founding of the Syrian garrison town of Wāsiṭ, midway between Kūfah and Baṣrah. Nevertheless, Baṣrah and Kūfah were militarily reactivated in 126/744 when 'Abdallāh b. 'Umar II, the governor of Baṣrah and Kūfah, resumed the distribution of the 'aṭā' among their Arab tribesmen after a long interval during which such payments had ceased. For further information relating to the demilitarization of Kūfah and Baṣrah during Umayyad times, see Shaban, *'Abbāsid Revolution*, pp. 54, 68, 133-4; Fukuzo, *'Abbāsid Autocracy*, pp. 17, 21-2.

¹³Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, pp. 42-60; *idem*, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 301; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 5, pp. 546-7, 549; vol. 6, pp. 77, 446; vol. 7, p. 41; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 502, 506-9; Shaban, *'Abbāsid Revolution*, pp. 46-7; Omar, *al-'Abbāsiyūn al-Awā'il*, pp. 42-50.

¹⁴Jāḥiẓ *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 40.

toward the central government revived when the Umayyad authority decided to eliminate their names from the army register and discontinue their stipends on account of their non-participation in the military expeditions,¹⁵ this feeling only deepened when these Arab tribesmen left their garrisons and became farmers and traders outside. By so doing they came under the authority of the non-Arab, non-Muslim indigenous lords (*dahāqān*, sing. *dihqān*), to whom they had to pay taxes.¹⁶

At this point, these Arab tribesmen felt a sense of unfairness not only for being deprived of their privileges as part of the Arab ruling class, but also for being treated as second-class Muslims.¹⁷ It was under these circumstances that the 'Abbāsid *da'wah* was able to penetrate into the ranks of the Arab settlers, persuading them of the need for a fundamental change not only in Khurāsān but in the whole empire, and that there were no better people than the *Ahl al-Bayt* to lead such a change.

The next element, who were also the focus of attention of the 'Abbāsid *da'wah* from its earliest days, were the local *mawālī* (Iranians),¹⁸ whose dissatisfaction with the Umayyad authority had been shown by their military contribution to previous

¹⁵Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 80; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 4, p. 399; Shaban, *'Abbāsid Revolution*, pp. 115-6.

¹⁶Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 6, p. 316; Kennedy, *Abbasid Caliphate*, p. 37; Shaban, *'Abbāsid Revolution*, pp. 47, 116.

¹⁷Shaban *'Abbāsid Revolution*, pp. 47, 156.

¹⁸*Akhhbār*, pp. 204, 285. For more discussion on the social and legal status of a person described as a *mawālī* in early Islam, see pp. 58 ff.

revolts.¹⁹ Like the Shi'ites of Kūfah, many of the indigenous Muslims of Khurāsān were deeply sympathetic toward the cause of the *Ahl al-Bayt* and their right to lead the Muslim community instead of the illegitimate Umayyad regime. Nevertheless, in contrast to the Kūfite Shi'ites, whose loyalty was always toward the 'Alid family, these Iranians did not, in fact, distinguish between the 'Alids and other members of Banū Hāshim. Rather, they viewed them all as *Ahl al-Bayt* without any special preference for one branch of the family over another.²⁰ Thus, it was very convenient for the 'Abbāsids to have their support during their revolt and after the revolution came to a conclusion. In addition to the ideological aspect, many of the local *mawālī* in Khurāsān also had other reasons to feel dissatisfied with the Umayyads and their representatives in the region, especially when it came to the taxation policy employed there. With the Arab conquest of Khurāsān, the indigenous lords

¹⁹The importance of the *mawālī* in Khurāsān was obvious during the rebellion of al-Ḥārith b. Surayj of Tamūm in Khurāsān in 116/734, in which they formed a significant part of his advocates. On al-Ḥārith's revolt, see Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 94-8; Wellhausen, *Arab Kingdom*, pp. 450-6; Shaban, *'Abbāsid Revolution*, pp. 118-22; Sharon, *Revolt*, pp. 27-33.

(*dahāqīn*) of the different towns and districts in Khurāsān concluded peace treaties with the Arab rulers, according to which the former agreed to pay a fixed sum of money annually to the Arabs as tribute. Also, according to the terms of these treaties, the assessment and the collection of the taxes were left absolutely to the *dahāqīn* without interference from the Arabs. In other words, although Khurāsān came under the Muslim authority, its financial administration remained in the hands of the *dahāqīn*, who not only decided how the burden of the tribute would be divided among the local population, but also determined the kinds of taxes imposed. With this absolute financial authority, the *dahāqīn* continued to carry out the old Sassanian taxation policy, according to which the local population had to bear the burden of primary taxes such as poll tax, land tax, trade tax, and occupation tax and also of secondary taxes such as marriage tax, petitions tax, and special taxes at the time of the *Nawrūz* festival.²¹ As conversion to Islam would eventually free people from many of these taxes including poll tax (*jizyah*) and land tax (*kharāj*), widespread

²⁰The sincere feeling of the Iranian Muslims toward the *Ahl al-Bayt* and their right to rule, as well as the indiscriminate view of these *mawālī* in favouring members of the *Ahl al-Bayt*, is well illustrated in a very interesting passage in the *Akhhbār* source, which has been surprisingly overlooked by modern scholars. The passage says: "Bukayr b. Māhān states that while he was sitting with Qays b. al-Sarī in Jurjān he met a non-Arab man who said in Persian, 'We have never seen any people more astray than the Arabs, who, following the death of their Prophet (peace be upon him), shifted their allegiance to others than his family.' Bukayr continued, 'Then the man wept and I could not restrain myself from weeping with him and I said, "May Allāh's mercy be upon you. How often you have witnessed falsehood superseding the right. The Arabs have been misled and diverted towards worldly gains, by which many have been fascinated. Some, however, have recovered and recognized their mistakes."' The man then asked, 'What then prevents you from advocating their cause, as I can assure you of the pledge of my people to support you in this.' Bukayr inquired, 'Can you do this?' The man answered, 'Yes. Stretch out your hand so I may make a pledge to you on this.' Bukayr said, 'I put my hand forward' and the man voiced his pledge, though we have never before thought of propagating our cause in Khurāsān" (*Akhhbār*, pp. 198-201). The account continues by noting that the Persian man was Zayd b. al-Nuhayd, from Jurjān, and that he was the second individual in the eastern provinces to give allegiance to the 'Abbāsids. Moreover, although Zayd himself died before the start of the revolt, his promise was wholly fulfilled when his people of Jurjān supported the revolutionary forces against the Umayyad army under the leadership of Nubātah b. Ḥanḍalah (*ibid.*, pp. 198-9, 201, 285).

conversion would be contrary to the financial interests of the *dahāqīn* as well as the Central Treasury in Damascus. Therefore, throughout most of the time of their rule, the Umayyads not only overlooked the heavy taxes imposed on non-Muslims in Khurāsān, but also denied the newly converted Iranians their legitimate right to be exempted from paying much of the no longer applicable taxes, including *jizyah*.²² What deepened the feeling of injustice among these converts was the fact that the non-Muslim *dahāqīn*, under the noses of the government agents, used their taxation authority to favour their own people who maintained their faith and at the expense of Muslims, whose burdens of taxation were unjustly increased.²³ In addition to the tax problems, many of the Iranians who accepted Islam and joined the Muslim armies also struggled for equal rights with their Arab co-religionists, especially in regard to

²¹ Khan, "Taxation in Persia", p. 736; Shaban, *'Abbāsid Revolution*, pp. 36, 91-2.

²² Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 6, p. 559; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 302; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 4, p. 321. It should be noted, however, that there were three attempts to remove taxation abuse experienced by the *mawālī* in Khurāsān. The first of these was made by Caliph 'Umar II (99-101/717-720); the second by Caliph Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik (105-125/724-743), carried out by his governor in Khurāsān, Ashras b. 'Abdallāh al-Salmī; and the third by the governor of Khurāsān, Naṣr b. Sayār (120-131/738-749). Nevertheless, the effects of none of these attempts lasted long owing to the unfavourable consequences that ensued, most notably the decline of sums coming from this tax to the government's Treasury. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 6, p. 559; vol. 7, p. 173; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 526. For more on taxation reform in early Islam, see D. C. Dennett, *Conversion and the Poll-Tax in Early Islam*, Cambridge, Mass., 1950; H. A. R. Gibb, "The Fiscal Rescript of 'Umar II", *Arabica*, vol. 2 (1955), pp. 1-16; Wellhausen, *Arab Kingdom*, pp. 267-311, 477-82; Shaban, *'Abbāsid Revolution*, pp. 76-91, 129-30.

²³ This was indicated by Naṣr b. Sayār when he said, "Verily, Bahrāmsīs was the protector of the Magians (*majūs*); he favoured them, protected them and put their burdens (taxes) on the Muslims. Verily, Ashbdād son of Gregory was the protector of the Christians, just as Aqiva the Jew protected the Jews. But I am the protector of the Muslims. I will defend them and shield them and make the polytheists carry their burdens." The account concludes by stating that there were 30,000 Muslims who had unjustly been paying the *jizyah* and there were 80,000 unbelievers who had been exempted from this tax. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 173 (English translation quoted from Hillenbrand, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 26, p. 24).

the '*aṭā*', right to which the Umayyads also sought to deny them.²⁴ As a result of the Umayyads' policies in Khurāsān, many of the local *mawālī* found in the 'Abbāsīd *da'wah*, with its broad Islamic socio-political agenda, the hope of a leadership that would replace the Umayyads, who had failed to implement true Islamic ideals.²⁵

It is worth noting, however, that not all the *mawālī* in Khurāsān supported the 'Abbāsīds. In fact, in the case of those *mawālī* who had affiliation (*walā'*) with an Arab tribe, it was typical that while the *mawālī* of the southern tribes (mostly anti-Umayyad) would support their Arab patrons, the *mawālī* of the northern tribes (mostly pro-Umayyad) would maintain their *walā'* and fight against the revolutionaries.²⁶

The least significant element of the 'Abbāsīd revolutionary forces was the slaves. The use of slaves in combat was not an 'Abbāsīd innovation as they had been used by Muslims as early as the first battle fought in Islam.²⁷ Nonetheless, while the use of slaves by the central government was on a small scale, only in most critical

²⁴This was clearly indicated in the complaint delivered to Caliph 'Umar II that there were 20,000 *mawālī* in Khurāsān who were participating in military campaigns without receiving stipends ('*aṭā*'). Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 6, p. 559; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 302; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 4, p. 321.

²⁵Kennedy, *Abbasid Caliphate*, p. 37.

²⁶Sharon, '*Abbāsīd Revolution*', p. 6; Omar, *Buḥūth fī al-Tārīkh al-'Abbāsī*, p. 49; Fukuzo, '*Abbāsīd Autocracy*', pp. 39-40, 44.

²⁷Ibn Sallām, *Amwāl*, p. 255; Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, vol. 1, pp. 104-5; Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 3, p. 34; Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. 1, p. 478; Pipes, *Slaves*, p. 110.

moments, and mainly against non-Muslim foes,²⁸ slaves seem to have played a far greater role on the rebels' side fighting against the government forces.²⁹ During the first two centuries of Islamic history, while slaves were used mainly in the civil service, many of them were highly skilled in martial arts and could endure extreme hardness, virtues which qualified some of them to win their freedom after demonstrating their prowess on the battlefield.³⁰ Learning from the lessons and mistakes of earlier revolts, the 'Abbāsids fully apprehended the need to attract such men, who could supply the revolution with additional manpower once it started. Consequently, from the outset of their movement in Khurāsān, the 'Abbāsids devoted part of their propaganda efforts to the slave community in particular.³¹ Despite this attention, however, the 'Abbāsīd *da'wah* did not, in fact, find at the beginning any real support among the slave population. In fact, only one runaway slave is reported to have joined the ranks of the rebels during the first two months after the outbreak of the revolt on the 24 Ramaḍān 129/8 June 747.³² However, the flow of slaves in large numbers to the revolutionary side only came later, especially

²⁸Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 6, p. 457; vol. 7, pp. 78, 81; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 4, p. 398; Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 72.

²⁹See e.g. Pipes, *Slaves*, pp. 110-31. It is worth noting, however, that in dealing with the revolt of 'Abdallāh b. Mu'āwiyah in 129/747, Pipes seems to misinterpret the Arabic text as he says, "Although the Kūfans joined 'Abdallāh's revolt, their slaves fought against him and lost." Yet looking to the same source (Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 371), we find that the account runs as follows: "When 'Abdallāh b. Mu'āwiyah was driven out of Kūfah, he went to Madā'in, where the people swore allegiance to him and a group from Kūfah joined him. He then went to Jibal and seized control there as well as in Ḥulwān, Qūmis, Iṣbahān and Rayy. The slaves of the Kūfans ran away to join him."

³⁰Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 78; Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 72.

³¹It is reported that Muṣ'ab b. Qays, one of the 'Abbāsīd *du'āh*, was assigned to the sole task of attracting slaves and no others (*Akhhār*, p. 280).

after the proclamation sent by the revolutionary leader, Abū Muslim, that any slave who joined the ranks would not only win his freedom, but also be treated equally with the rest of the *da'wah* people.³³ This sensitive message had a deep impact among slaves, who saw this as a golden opportunity to win their freedom.

It is worth noting, however, that not all slaves were welcomed by the 'Abbāsid *da'wah* as it appears that there were certain qualifying factors for such acceptance. In dealing with slaves, the 'Abbāsid leadership, at least in the early stage of their revolution, seem to have put forth two conditions. First, adherence to the Islamic faith was made a requisite. Although this might also have included freemen within its scope, it was a principle much more strictly applied with regard to slaves. Thus, one of the questions the runaway slave would be asked before being allowed to join the ranks of the revolutionaries was whether he was a Muslim or not as, most likely, any non-Muslim would be turned away.³⁴ The reason for this condition sprang from the fact that the 'Abbāsid *da'wah* wanted to demonstrate legitimate foundation in Islam in order to justify its action of seizing the properties (slaves) of co-religionists, something which it would have been almost impossible to justify if those slaves were non-Muslims. Indeed, when their masters demanded the return of their slaves, the revolutionary leadership refused the request, arguing that the Muslim slaves had

³²*Ibid.*

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴*Ibid.*

opposed their masters for a noble Islamic cause, the love of *Āl Muḥammad*.³⁵ The revolutionaries went even further, asserting that it was not the *da'wah* that had freed those slaves, but, they said, "Allāh is the one who set them free."³⁶ The second condition put forth by the 'Abbāsīds was the race of the slave, as it appears that blacks were not eligible to enter the ranks of the *da'wah*. The reason for this stood on a directive (*waṣīyah*) issued by the 'Abbāsīd Imām, Ibrāhīm, to his propagandists (*du'āh*) in Khurāsān, instructing them not to accept into the ranks of the *da'wah* ten sorts of people, among whom were those described as *al-ja'd al-qaṭaṭ*, meaning literary people with short curly hair.³⁷ What confirms the selective policy of the revolutionary leadership in dealing with slaves, who wished to join the ranks of the revolutionary army, was the fact that some slaves are reported to have turned back to their masters.³⁸ As for those who were accepted, subsequently, to prevent their being oppressed by freemen in the ranks, the slaves who did join the revolution were separated in their own military unit, which later took part in fighting the Umayyad supporters in Abīward and Nasā.³⁹

³⁵*Ibid.*

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 387. The whole *waṣīyah* will be discussed in Ch. 2. As various Arabic dictionaries and other types of sources indicate, the meaning of the term *ja'd* is 'curly hair', which is one of the distinctive features of black peoples. Thus, if we assume that this *waṣīyah* concerned free people who might have black features, as one of their parents was black, then it would be more restricted to pure black slaves. On the term *al-ja'd al-qaṭaṭ*, see for example Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, vol. 3, p. 405 (s.v. "*al-ja'd*"); Ibn Sallām, *Gharīb al-Ḥadīth*, vol. 3, p. 27 (s.v. "*al-ja'd*"); 'Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī bi-sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol. 10, p. 357; Şūyūtī, *Sharḥ Muwaṭṭa' Mālik*, vol. 2, p. 219.

³⁸*Akhbār*, p. 284.

³⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 281, 284; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 366.

The last and surely most significant element of the Khurāsānī armies was the Arab tribal forces (*muqātilah*) stationed in the region. Although these Arab fighters maintained their Arab tribal identification, their long residence in Khurāsān developed among them a very strong sense of regional loyalty. Thus, they not only observed themselves as Arabs, but also as Khurāsānīs.⁴⁰ In the early days of the open revolt, the 'Abbāsids adherents were not as many or as strong as some sources indicate, perhaps numbering only between 3,000 and 4,000, most of whom were infantry and poorly equipped.⁴¹ Despite their political commitment to the cause, this army, in a practical sense, lacked the potential manpower and the martial skills to match the Syrian armies. Clearly, a much better trained and more experienced force was badly needed for the revolution to succeed. Through very masterful political manoeuvres exploiting the tribal struggle that had just started to intensify in the province, the 'Abbāsid *da'wah*, under the leadership of Abū Muslim, managed to gain the support of the *muqātilah*, especially those of Yaman and Rabī'ah.

Both the Arab tribes as integral political units and their *muqātilah* as individuals had reason to be dissatisfied with the Umayyads' administrative and fiscal policy in the region. For the *muqātilah*, the persistent attempts of the Umayyad Caliphs in concert with their Syrian governors in the region to appropriate much of the booty captured

⁴⁰In addition to their *nisbah* to their Arab tribes, many of the Arab tribesmen in Khurāsān assumed a lineage derived from the areas they were stationed in Khurāsān. For more information on the assimilation of the Arabs in Khurāsān, see Shaban, *'Abbāsid Revolution*, pp. 46-51; 114-6; 156-7.

⁴¹*Akhbār*, p. 277; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 356-8; Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, p. 361. With an element of exaggeration K. al-'Uyūn (p. 183) states that 10,000 men, some of whom were cavalry and some infantry, joined Abū Muslim on the first day of the open revolt.

through the military campaigns in *Mā warā' al-Nahr* (Transoxania) were enough to anger them. They viewed these actions not only as conflicting with Islamic teachings and consequently depriving them of their legal rights, but, more importantly, as affecting their livelihood, especially since these spoils were a prime financial source of income in addition to their annual stipends (*'aṭā*).⁴² A similar abusive policy was also practised with regard to the taxes (*ḥay'*) raised in the province. While the central government viewed these taxes as an excellent financial source for the Central Treasury in Damascus and therefore endeavoured to extract as much as it could, the people of Khurāsān resisted such a policy, feeling that the money ought rather to be spent in the province.⁴³ Another reason for the *muqātilah* to feel discontented was the *tajmīr* policy adopted by the regional government in Khurāsān, in consequence of which the *muqātilah* lived a very harsh military life. The incessant attacks of the Turks on Islamic frontiers and the attempts of the local rulers in Transoxania to revoke the Arab treaties led the Umayyads not only to send these troops on military campaigns during spring and summer, which was the common practice in Arab warfare, but also to keep them in these distant and difficult frontiers during winter without their being rotated (hence the term *tajmīr*, used to denote this practice) with fresh troops.⁴⁴

⁴²Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, vol. 2, pp. 296-7; Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. 3, p. 221; Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 62; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 5, pp. 251-2; Ibn Sallām, *Amwāl*, p. 361.

⁴³Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 20-1, 427; Ibn Qutaybah, *Imāmah*, pt. 2, p. 142; Shaban, *'Abbāsīd Revolution*, pp. 37-8, 103; Kennedy, *Abbasid Caliphate*, p. 37.

⁴⁴Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 20; Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. 3, p. 141; Bosworth, "Recruitment", p. 61; Omar, *al-'Abbāsiyūn al-Awā'il*, p. 50. On the term *tajmīr*, see *EL*², s.v. "Tadjmīr".

What further made Khurāsān suitable for the 'Abbāsid revolution was the intense feuding and conflict that went on between the Arab tribesman there, which was, in fact, part of the inter-tribal struggle happening in other parts of the Islamic Empire, especially in Iraq and Syria. In a historical perspective, this was one of the primary reasons for the Umayyads' downfall. With no connection to pre-Islamic feuding, the tribal feuds in Umayyad times seem to have been due to economic and social factors going back to the time of the conquest and the settlement of the Arab tribes in the conquered lands. In their new environment, the central issue was now no longer the domination of pasture land and caravan routes, but instead the wielding of power and controlling the wealth of some of the most prosperous regions in the East.⁴⁵ The tribal conflict in Khurāsān, as else where in the Islamic Empire, centralized in general terms between the two major camps: Muḍar (northern tribes) on the one hand and Yaman along with its ally Rabī'ah (southern tribes) on the other. This tribal strife was sharpened by the favouritism of the Umayyad Caliphs toward one group of tribes at the expense of another. Most often, this preferential treatment would be reflected in the Umayyad Caliphs' selection of men of a particular tribal origin to hold governmental high offices, especially the post of governorship,⁴⁶ an office of

⁴⁵There are, in fact, different views regarding the origin of the strife between Arab tribes in the time of the Umayyads. While Goldziher (*Muslim Studies*, vol. 1, p. 91) thinks that the struggle between the Southern and Northern Arab tribes derived from the rivalry between Quraysh and Anṣār, Wellhausen (*Arab Kingdom*, p. 47) believes that the hostility "did not exist before the capture of Syria by Muslims and the immigration thither of Qais." On the tribal strife in Khurāsān, Syria, and Iraq, see Sharon, *Banner*, pp. 60-70; *idem*, *Revolution*, pp. 25-7, 34-8, 51-3; Fukuzo, '*Abbāsid Autocracy*', pp. 12-27; Kennedy, "The Origin of the Qays-Yaman Dispute in Bilād al-Shām", in *Proceedings of the Second Symposium on the History of Bilād al-Shām during the Early Islamic Period to 40 AH / 650 AD*, vol. 1, ed. M. Bakhit (Amman, 1987), pp. 168-74; Crone, "Were the Qays and Yemen of the Umayyad Period Political Parties?", *Der Islam*, 71/1(1994), pp. 1-57.

⁴⁶Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, pp. 340-1; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 156.

particular importance since it would determine the political, economic, and even social privileges of a particular group of tribes. In other words, if the appointment of a governor from among the northern tribes entailed the rise of all northern tribes and at the same time the suppression and decline of influence of the southern tribes, then the opposite would also be true.⁴⁷ However, if a particular tribal member's holding of a state office entailed both a rise in that tribe's status and its support for the Caliphate, by contrast such a person's fall from grace entailed, if not his tribe's affiliation with the opposition, then at least an accord with disaffected groups. This was clearly illustrated by the Azd tribe in particular and the southern tribes in general in Khurāsān, who gained a high status and privileges during the governorship of al-Muhallab b. Abī Ṣufrah and his sons (beginning in 78/ 697). Nevertheless, the southern tribes lost this status with the final fall of the Muhallab family in 99/717, after which they became second in place to the northern tribes, who held this office during most of the remaining period of Umayyad rule and pursued an anti-Yamanite policy, which in turn prompted the Yamanites to side with the opposition against the central government and its Muḍarite representative in Khurāsān.⁴⁸

Although these tribal forces of Yaman and Rabī'ah joined the 'Abbāsīd revolt for reasons of self-interest rather than on ideological grounds, they eventually integrated

⁴⁷Dīnawarī, *Akḥbār*, p. 351; Sharon, *'Abbāsīd Revolution*, p.26.

⁴⁸Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 6, p. 558; vol. 7, pp. 321, 337-8, 364, 370; Dīnawarī, *Akḥbār*, p. 352; Sharon, *Banners*, pp. 55f.; *idem.*, *'Abbāsīd Revolution*, p. 27; Blankinship, "'Abbāsīd Revolution", p. 600.

with the rest of the revolutionary elements in one military bloc commonly referred to in the sources as *ahl Khurāsān* or the *Khurāsāniyah* (Khurāsānīs).⁴⁹

After the overthrow of the Umayyad dynasty and the accession of the 'Abbāsids to power, the Khurāsānī forces seem to have passed through a formative stage during which they were transformed from a revolutionary militia into a very well-organized, well-disciplined, and professional army. A notable early description of the 'Abbāsid military institution in its early stages is found in a monograph written by Ibn al-Muqaffa' and entitled *Risālah fi al-Ṣaḥābah*.⁵⁰ The significance of this work springs not only from the fact that it was written during the formative years of al-Manṣūr's reign as a compendium of advice on how to govern but, more importantly, from the fact that it gives a clearly defined picture of the Khurāsānīs in respect of their character, loyalty, and the relationship of their warriors with the head of the state. What gives the work of Ibn al-Muqaffa' credibility is the fact that the author himself had lived very closely within the inner circle of the 'Abbāsid Caliph's court and family. Thus, a man with such intelligence and capable of such brilliant analysis must have been acutely aware of what was happening within the court as well as in

⁴⁹ *Akḥbār*, p. 375; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 407, 418, 434-5, 449, 453, 475; Azdī, *Tārīkh*, pp. 149, 150, 153; Dīnawarī, *Akḥbār*, pp. 367, 390.

⁵⁰ Goitein (*Studies in Islamic History*, p. 153) points out that the text was written sometime between 136/754, the year in which al-Manṣūr came to power, and 142/760, the year in which Ibn al-Muqaffa' was executed. Lassner (*Shaping*, p. 106) gives the more precise date of 137/755, sometime between the end of the revolt of 'Abdallāh b. 'Alī and the execution of Abū Muslim.

the military institution.⁵¹ In his text, the author reveals his clear and deep admiration for the Khurāsānī troops over the Arab tribal armies such as the Syrians. He says of the Khurāsānīs, “This is an army the like of which has never before been seen in Islam.” In character they are, as he illustrates, loyal, generous, incorruptible, and obedient to the authorities. He adds, “We do not know any other warriors who possess such characteristics.”⁵² Although the overall purpose of the *Risālah*, written as a series of advices directed to the Caliph, is to assist the Caliph in keeping firm control over all government institutions, the author devotes a great part of his treatise to a discussion in series of the ideological, social, and fiscal problems that the Khurāsānī army suffered from, which in turn affected not only its military discipline, but also created a serious threat to the Caliph’s authority. The first and most serious problem the author discusses concerns the misinterruption by some of the Khurāsānī officers of the limits of the loyalty that they owed to their Caliph. Although genuine devotion is required from the army, yet Ibn al-Muqaffā’ indicates that the loyalty of those officers went beyond healthy limits so that it actually constituted a real threat to the Caliph’s authority since it went so far as to entertain extreme and dangerous notions. Exemplifying such notions, Ibn al-Muqaffā’ writes, “There are officers among them who believe that if the Caliph were to order the mountains to move, they would move, and if the Caliph were to order one to turn his back to the *qiblah*

⁵¹For more details about Ibn al-Muqaffā’, see Jahshiyārī, *al-Wuzarā’*, pp. 79, 103-10; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, vol. 2, pp. 151-5; Ibn Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, p. 172; *El*², s.v., “Ibn al-Mukaffā’ ”; Ch. Pellat, *Ibn al-Muqaffā’, mort vers 140/757, <<conseiller>> du calife*, Paris, 1976.

⁵²Ibn al-Muqaffā’, “*Risālah*”, p. 119.

[the direction of prayer, i.e. toward Makkah] during prayer, he would do.”⁵³ For Ibn al-Muqaffa‘, these radical views not only caused confusion and wonder among other Khurāsānīs, but also might become the occasion of ideological confrontations tending to undermine the unity of the army.⁵⁴ In addition, excessive zeal with no clear guide to conduct might spell a greater danger for the Caliph than for his enemies. It is, as Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ describes it, “like the rider of a lion who terrifies those who see him but the rider himself is the most terrified.”⁵⁵ As a solution to this problem, Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ advises the Caliph to write down a short directive covering everything the soldiers should do or abstain from doing. This text should be learned by the high-ranking officers of the army so that they can command those in the lower ranks in accordance with its provisions.⁵⁶

The next problem Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ discusses is that, for practical reasons, and also to preserve the goodwill of the Khurāsānīs and to keep them subject to the authority’s control, the Caliph should not give them the responsibility of collecting taxes (*kharāj*), since that would eventually lead to their corruption. The main concern here is the expectation that if the Khurāsānīs did this work on any kind of a permanent basis, it would lead them to develop another source of revenue. This would lead in the course of time to their becoming economically independent and give them the

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.120.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* "فلو أن أمير المؤمنين كتب أمانا معروفا بليغا وجيزا محيطا بكل شيء يجب أن يعملوا فيه أو يكفوا عنه "

capacity for striking out on their own, a particular danger when their personal interest was in conflict with the Caliph's decisions.⁵⁷

Ibn al-Muqaffa' also indicates that there were among the lower-ranking troops individuals whose qualities and qualifications were far better than those of their officers. Therefore, promoting these unrecognized troopers through the ranks would not only be extremely useful for the common soldiers themselves, but also for the leaders over them in the ranks.⁵⁸ This advice would seem to suggest that some of the Khurāsānī commanders were not as competent as they should be and that their ties with the 'Abbāsid *da'wah* had been the chief reason for their being promoted in political and military status.

Furthermore, it seems that among the Khurāsānīs there were many who were ignorant or had limited knowledge of Islamic teaching. Therefore, in order to take full advantage of their innate capabilities, Ibn al-Muqaffa' stresses the necessity for religious education among the soldiers. This would be by learning the Qur'ān, the Sunnah, and the importance of such religious doctrines as faithfulness and infallibility.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 122-3.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

Ibn al-Muqaffa' also suggests that the troops be encouraged to look to the humble lifestyle of the Commander of the Faithful as an example to be followed in their own social life.⁵⁹

Finally, to avoid any aversion among the troops for financial reasons, Ibn al-Muqaffa' suggests that the Caliph should draw up a timetable for the troops who are registered in the *Dīwān* to receive their *arzāq* (salaries). The period could be every three or four months, or as the Caliph felt it proper. Furthermore, because fluctuations in the market might have an effect on the price-wage factor, Ibn al-Muqaffa' recommends that some of the pay be given in the form of food and some as fodder, yet to be given on a regular basis in order to keep the army from complaining and thus always ready to face the enemies.⁶⁰ The overall financial strategy of the army in Ibn al-Muqaffa''s thesis is very clear. To prevent the army from developing another source of income, which would give them the scope of becoming economically independent, and to maintain their absolute financial dependence on the authority, the Caliph had to pay the soldiers regularly, which entailed the complete subordination on the part of the army to its provider.

The loyalty of the Khurāsānīs, which was well galvanized during the reign of al-Manṣūr, enabled the 'Abbāsid Caliphs to rely on them in the most critical times. Besides their military value in defending the frontiers of the state against outsider threats or when occasionally sent on short military campaigns to wage the *jihad*

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

against the Byzantines' territory, their role was very noticeable at the internal level. The 'Abbāsids used the Khurāsānīs not only to affirm their sovereignty in Arab regions such as the Ḥijāz and Ifrīqīyā, known for their antagonism attitude toward the central government, but also to crush revolts led by other disaffected Khurāsānī leaders.⁶¹ Moreover, engagement in battle was not the only role for the Khurāsānīs to play, as the 'Abbāsid Caliphs employed them to achieve their own political ambition, especially with regard to the matter of succession. For example, when al-Manṣūr wrote to 'Īsā b. Mūsā in 147-764 asking him to step down from the line of succession in favour of al-Mahdī, he urged him to bow to the wish of God and the people of Khurāsān, "whose affection for him [al-Mahdī]," he claimed, "had reached a point when they speak of nothing but his virtue, refuse to do anything except by his name, and recognize nothing but his right."⁶² Because of the unrivalled loyalty of the Khurāsānīs, we see Caliph al-Manṣūr recommending them to his son and heir apparent al-Mahdī, saying:

I recommend the people of Khurāsān to you. They are your supporters (*anṣārūk*) and partisans (*shī'atuk*), who have spent their fortune to establish your rule, and shed their blood for your sake. To keep your love in their hearts, you should favour them, forgive those who have transgressed, reward them for what they have done, and care for the families of those who have died.⁶³

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁶¹Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 461-2, 464, 497, 508.

⁶²*Ibid.*, vol. 8, pp. 15-6.

⁶³*Ibid.*, pp. 102-3.

For much of the first century of 'Abbāsīd rule, the Khurāsānī forces continued to be the predominant and most distinguished unit of the central army in Baghdad. During that period the Khurāsānī unit was able to renew itself militarily through two sources. First, the region of Khurāsān itself proved to be a vital source of new recruits as, for nearly three quarters of a century (until the accession of al-Mu'taṣim in 218/833), it continued to supply the central government in Baghdad with its needed manpower. In this respect, it is reported that during the reign of Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd in 176/793, al-Faḍl b. Yaḥyā al-Barmakī, while he was engaged in a military campaign beyond the Oxus, recruited a large army of non-Arab Khurāsānīs (*jund min al-'ajam*). According to reports, this army numbered 500,000 men and was known by the name al-'Abbāsiyah. From this army, 20,000 men were later sent to Iraq, where they settled and became known as al-Karnabiyah.⁶⁴ The second source of recruits was the descendants of the old Khurāsānī veterans in Baghdad, who were known by the name of *al-abnā'* ('the sons'). While we shall treat this group in greater detail in the following section, we may note here that many of these descendants not only inherited from their ancestors Baghdad as a homeland, but also military service as a career. Although the first reference in the sources to the *abnā'* in this particular sense is found as early as the time of Caliph al-Mahdī, yet the *abnā'* as a military force continued to serve as an unidentifiable body within the framework of the old Khurāsānī unit up until the end of the reign of al-Amīn.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, p. 257; K. al-'Uyūn, p. 296; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 172; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 9, pp. 35-6. For some suggestions on the origin of the word Karnabiyah, see Bosworth, *The History of Ṭabarī*, vol. 30, p. 144, n. 529.

Starting from the reign of al-Ma'mūn, however, the *abnā'* emerged as a military group distinct from the Khurāsānī forces of that time.⁶⁵ The separation of the *abnā'* came as a result of a profound change that occurred within the Khurāsānī unit, especially with regard to the ethnic identity of the elements who composed it during the reign of al-Ma'mūn. This change started with the civil war (194/810-198/814) between Caliph al-Amīn and his brother al-Ma'mūn, the governor of Khurāsān. Whereas al-Amīn relied on the *abnā'* of the Khurāsānī veterans, who now represented the standing army in Baghdad, al-Ma'mūn counted on regional forces recruited from Khurāsān and Transoxania. Nevertheless, in contrast to the early Khurāsānīs who had raised the 'Abbāsid family to power, the new Khurāsānīs consisted mostly of non-Arab elements, including Bukhāriyah, Khwārizmiyah, Daylamīs, and Turks, who jointly were simply described in Muslim chronicles as '*ajam ahl Khurāsān*'.⁶⁶ Following the defeat of al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn's accession to power, the new Caliph sought to employ more of these eastern non-Arab elements within his army. In this regard, it is reported that al-Ma'mūn used to send envoys to

⁶⁵In a comparison of the best and most courageous groups of his army, al-Ma'mūn classified his army into four groups: '*ajam ahl Khurāsān, mawālī, abnā', and Atrāk*'. Ibn Ṭayfūr, *Kitāb Baghdād*, p. 80. Further, al-Jāhīz (*Manāqib*, vol. 1, pt. 1, pp. 36-40), who states that he was writing in the days of al-Mu'taṣim about events that took place during the reign of al-Ma'mūn, reports on the structure of the *jund al-Khilāfah* (the army of the Caliphate), stating that this army was composed of five groups: Khurāsānīs, Arabs, Turks, *mawālī*, and the *abnā'*. This clearly indicates the separation of the *abnā'* from the Khurāsānīs as they first became a distinct group among others.

⁶⁶Ibn Ṭayfūr, *Kitāb Baghdād*, pp. 80, 147; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 391-3; Ayalon, "Reforms", p. 5; Sharon, "Reforms", p. 140; Fukuzo, '*Abbāsid Autocracy*', pp. 99-102. Ironically, while the *abnā'* looked on the new Khurāsānīs in al-Ma'mūn's army as '*ajam*', the Arab tribesmen of Syria and Jazīrah viewed both the *abnā'* and the new Khurāsānīs as '*ajam*'. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 141, 426, 652.

the people of Transoxania, offering salaries to those who wished to be enlisted in the *Dīwān*.⁶⁷

Although the Khurāsānī unit, with its predominantly new non-Arab element, remained the preponderant military group within the 'Abbāsid central army throughout the reign of Caliph al-Ma'mūn, it lost this military distinction soon after the succession of al-Mu'taṣim to the throne in 218/836. Not only did al-Mu'taṣim diverge from the practice of his predecessors by recruiting slave Turks on a large scale into the army, but, more importantly, he gave them preference and distinction over all the other groups in his army, including the Khurāsānīs.⁶⁸ Such excessive preference led eventually to great resentment on the part the Khurāsānī commanders, who sought an occasion to assassinate al-Mu'taṣim and replace him by his nephew al-'Abbās as a means of regaining their former status.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, their unsuccessful attempt resulted in the execution of many of the Khurāsānīs' most prominent commanders and consequently the eclipse of the Khurāsānīs as one of the main units within the 'Abbāsid central forces in Iraq.⁷⁰

⁶⁷Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 528-9.

⁶⁸Mas'ūdī, *Tanbih*, p. 354; *idem*, *Murūj*, vol. 4, pp. 53-5; Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 29; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 71; Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib*, p. 495.

⁶⁹Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 71.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 71-8; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, pp. 46-8; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, pp. 288-9; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 476; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 11, pp. 83-5.

1.2 The *Abnā'*⁷¹

During the first century of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate, the term *abnā'* was applied to the descendants of the Khurāsānī forces who brought the 'Abbāsīds to power and later settled in Iraq.⁷² In addition to being referred to as *abnā'* (sing. *abnāwī* or *banāwī*),⁷³ their most common name, they were also known as *abnā' al-dawlah*, *abnā' al-shī'ah*, *abnā' al-kifāyah*,⁷⁴ *abnā' da'wah*,⁷⁵ and *abnā' al-jund al-Khurāsānīyah*.⁷⁶ Moreover, because the early Khurāsānīs were of mixed race, including both Arabs and Iranians, the *abnā'* were descended from both stocks. Thus, they were also called as *abnā' Khurāsān al-muwalladūn*.⁷⁷

Although the *abnā'* were born and raised in Iraq and underwent further Arabization, they continued to maintain a great deal of pride in their Khurāsānī origins. While they regarded Baghdad as their homeland, Khurāsān for them was the nucleus of

⁷¹ Literally, the term *abnā'* means 'sons' or 'descendants'. In pre-Islamic history this expression was used to denote members of the Persian community born in Yaman whose ancestors came first as soldiers to defend the country against the Ethiopian intervention in AD 575. Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 5, pp. 534-6. For further information, see al-Mīd'aj, 'Abd al-Muḥsin, "al-Abnā' mundhu Dukhūlihim al-Yaman ḥattā Niḥāyat al-Qarn al-Thālith al-Hijrī: Dirāsah li Awḍā'ihim al-Siyāsīyah aw al-Iqtisādīyah", *Dirāsāt Tārīkhiyah*, no. 37 (Damascus, 1990) pp. 19-46; *EF*², s.v. "Abnā'".

⁷² Dīnawarī, *Akḥbār*, p. 390; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 147, 290.

⁷³ Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, pt. 1, pp. 9, 25, 31, 34.

⁷⁴ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 147, 430.

⁷⁵ Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 8.

⁷⁶ Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, vol. 21, p. 61.

their existence and it was their origins there that, from their point of view, gave them distinction over other ethnic and regional groups.⁷⁸ The *banāwī* characteristically described his place of origin (*aṣl*) as Khurāsān, the region from which the 'Abbāsid dynasty (*dawlah*) sprang. However, if Khurāsān was the place of origin, then Baghdad was, for the *banāwī*, the branch (*far'*) and the seat of the Caliphate where the remaining people of the 'Abbāsid *da'wah* and the sons of the *shī'ah* resided, and as such was viewed by the *abnā'* as 'the Khurāsān of Iraq'.⁷⁹ As he was born and raised close to the circle of the Caliph's court, the *banāwī* typically boasted that his connection to the dynasty was more prestigious than that of his father or grandfather. In this regard, a *banāwī* states, "We are raised by the Caliphs and we are the neighbours of the Viziers. We were born in the court of our kings and under the wings of our Caliphs."⁸⁰

The first appearance of the *abnā'* as a distinct military group came with the outbreak of the civil war between al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn in 194/810, during which the *abnā'* formed the nucleus of al-Amīn's army, which was known as *ahl Baghdad* or *jund ahl Baghdad*, vis-à-vis al-Ma'mūn's army, which was described as '*ajam ahl*

⁷⁷Ibn Ṭayfūr, *Baghdād*, p. 80. The author explains further by saying, "Their fathers were those who led the *dawlah*." "وآبائهم هم الذين قادوا الدولة." The term *muwalladūn* means 'people of mixed origins'; see Ayalon, "Reforms", p. 6. Al-Jāḥiẓ (*Rasā'il*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 31) states, "The *banāwī* is a Khurāsānī by virtue of birth." (البنوي خراساني من جهة الولادة.)

⁷⁸Interestingly, the *abnā'* regarded themselves as a distinct group set apart from both the Arabs and the *mawālī*. Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 26.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 25-6.

Khurāsān.⁸¹ It should be noted, however, that when sources speak of the *abnā'* in the time of the civil war, they clearly distinguish between two groups, each of which had its own military commanders and its own specific political agenda. This division within the *abnā'* community seems to have been based on two key factors: first, the geographical location of their settlements in Baghdad; and, second, the variations in position and privileges enjoyed by each within the 'Abbāsīd court and the army. A search for the origins of this split suggests that it dated to the year 151/769. This was the year when Caliph al-Manṣūr decided to found al-Raṣāfah, or 'Askar al-Mahdī, on the east bank of the Tigris, to serve as a military encampment for his son and heir apparent, al-Mahdī.⁸² According to historical sources, the insurrection of the standing troops in Baghdad in 151/759 had made al-Manṣūr aware of the expediency of dividing his army in Baghdad. Thus, while he stationed part of it in al-Raṣāfah, the other part remained on the left bank of the city. By this arrangement, he could use one division against the other in the event of an insurrection by either.⁸³ By this expedient, the Caliph created in effect two distinct centres of military encampment in Baghdad: one in the north-west suburb of al-Ḥarbiyah, on the western bank of the

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁸¹ Ibn Ṭayfūr, *Baghdād*, p. 147. There is no doubt that not all the members of the army of *ahl Baghdad* were descended from the early Khurāsānīs. Unfortunately, the sources do not provide us with many clues that would help in determining the identity of the different groups in this army. However, what we may be certain of is that the *abnā'* constituted the backbone of this army. Al-Ṭabarī (*Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 412, 423) reports that after the defeat of 'Alī b. 'Īsā b. Māhān, al-Amīn dispatched another army consisting of 20,000 *abnā'* under the command of 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Abnāwī. With the defeat of this army, al-Amīn dispatched a third army consisting of 20,000 *abnā'* under the command of 'Abdallāh b. Qaḥṭabah, in order to try to halt the advance of al-Ma'mūn's forces towards Baghdad.

⁸² Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 37

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 37-9; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 198.

Tigris, and the other in the suburb of al-Raṣāfah, on the east bank. According to topographical sources, just as had happened on the western side, many prominent Khurāsānī commanders received land grants in al-Raṣāfah and their numbers there seemed to increase over time and that for two reasons. First, it was because al-Raṣāfah became the administrative centre of the government and the residence of the 'Abbāsid Caliphs from the time of al-Mahdī. Second, al-Raṣāfah had more space available for new construction than the west side, which was a tightly constricted peninsula located between the rivers Euphrates and the Tigris.⁸⁴ In recognition of this topographical separation, the *abnā'* who inhabited the east side came to be referred to as *ahl al-jānīb al-sharqī* ('the people of the east side'),⁸⁵ while the *abnā'* who remained on the west side were known as *al-ḥarbiyah*,⁸⁶ *ahl al-jānīb al-gharbī* ('the people of the west side'),⁸⁷ or *abnā' al-arbāḍ* ('the *abnā'* of the suburbs').⁸⁸ Regarding their leaders, although sources indicate that Khuzaymah b. Khāzim, Muḥammad b. al-'Abbās, and others were among the leaders of the *abnā'* of the east side, 'Alī b. 'Īsā b. Māhān, and later his son, al-Ḥusayn, were the key figures around

⁸⁴ Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, pp. 22, 25.

⁸⁵ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 546, 566, 571.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 429-30, 535, 543, 544; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, pp. 439-40. In a geographical context, *Ḥarbiyah* refers to the quarter of Baghdad so called, north of the Syrian Gate of the Round City, balancing Karkh to its south. Originally the quarter was named after al-Manṣūr's commander Ḥarb b. 'Abdallāh. See Le Strange, *Baghdad*, pp. 107-35; Lassner, *Topography*, pp. 68, 112, 254.

⁸⁷ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 546.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 497.

whom the entire company of the *abnā'* of the east side congregated.⁸⁹ On the other hand, there were two distinguished leaders amongst the *abnā'* of the west side. The first and most important was Muḥammad b. Abī Khālīd al-Marwazī, who is described by Ya'qūbī as "the chief commander of the *ḥarbiyah* and the most obeyed amongst them."⁹⁰ The second was Asad al-Ḥarbī. Although there is no reference in the relevant sources to his family or origin, he was probably the son of Abā Asad, a *mawlā* of Caliph al-Manṣūr and one of his commanders, after whom the river near the Baṭīḥah area of Baghdad was named.⁹¹

The second indicator of the distinction between the two factions of *abnā'* seems to relate to the position and privileges enjoyed by each at that time in both the army and the court. This fact is well illustrated throughout a passage in al-Ṭabarī which

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 405, 411, 428-30. For some historical background to the family of 'Alī b. 'Īsā b. Māhān during and after the 'Abbāsid revolution, see Kennedy, *Abbasid Caliphate*, pp. 104, 106.

⁹⁰ Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 439. "وكان شيخ قواد الحربية والمطاع فيهم." Muḥammad belonged to a very prominent family who settled in Khurāsān in Marw al-Rūdh. His father, Abū Khālīd, was described as one of the revolutionary commanders who fought against the Umayyad forces first in Khurāsān and later in Iraq. After the establishment of Baghdad, Abū Khālīd, along with other followers from Marw al-Rūdh, received a portion of land (fief) in the north-west of the Round City. His name continues to be mentioned in the sources as one of the 'Abbāsid commanders, and the last mention of him relates to the year 171/788 when he defeated al-Faḍl b. Sa'īd, one of the Khārijite rebels. Presumably he died soon after that date. Kennedy, *Abbasid Caliphate*, p. 105; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 391, 418; vol. 8, pp. 41, 113, 235.

⁹¹ Balādhurī, *Fūṭūḥ*, pp. 359-60; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 384. The administrative and military separation between the two camps in Baghdad became evident as early as the reign of al-Mahdī. Jurisdictional sources, for example, point out that starting from the time of Caliph al-Mahdī, each side had its own judges. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 140; *K. al-'Uyūn*, p. 281; Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh*, vol. 5, p. 389; vol. 12, p. 308; Wakī', *Akḥbār al-Quḍāh*, vol. 3, p. 25. With regard to the military separation, the clearest testimony to this comes in an account by al-Ṭabarī (*Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 431) relating to events in the time of the civil war. In it al-Ṭabarī notes that after Caliph al-Amīn had pardoned al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī b. 'Īsā b. Māhān for his attempt to overthrow him, the latter simply became "the sole master of both camps in Baghdad" (سيد العسكرين).

describes the events that took place during the attempt of al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī b. 'Isā b. Māhān to depose and imprison al-Amīn in 196/812:

Muḥammad b. Abī Khālīd stood up at the Syrian Gate and said, 'Men! By God, I do not know why al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī is acting as if he were our commander and taking charge of this affair instead of us. He is not the oldest among us, nor the one among us with the greatest claim to honor, nor the highest among us in rank.' ... Asad al-Ḥarbī stood up and said, 'People of Ḥarbiyah, this is a day of great consequence. You have been asleep, and your sleep has lasted a long time. You have lagged behind, and others have been given precedence over you. Some people have taken the position that Muḥammad [al-Amīn] should be deposed and imprisoned; as far you, go and take the position that he should be released and set free.' ... '[The troops from] Ḥarbiyah arose, and with them arose most of the people of the suburbs, with drawn swords and good equipment. They fought fiercely against al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī and his forces from mid-morning until the rays of the sun grew weak, inflicting many wounds upon his forces. Al-Ḥusayn was taken prisoner. Asad al-Ḥarbī went in to Muḥammad, broke his fetters, and seated him in the caliph's seat. Muḥammad noticed some men who were not wearing military or army clothing and who were not carrying weapons; he gave them orders, and they took what they needed from the weapons that were in the storerooms.⁹²

As in the case of the first factor previously described, the origin of this distinction in privilege between the *abnā'* seems also to go back to the reign of al-Manṣūr and the foundation of al-Raṣāfah. According to sources that discuss the foundation of al-Raṣāfah, al-Manṣūr not only sought to break up the unity of his army in Baghdad by dividing it along the banks of the Tigris, but also to sow seeds of rivalry between the men of the two camps. The purpose of this was, as mentioned above, to enable him to use one against the other when the need arose. Nevertheless, while Caliph al-

Manṣūr must have realized that, to be able to play this risky game, he had first to distance himself from their disagreements and maintain a delicate balance between the men of the two camps, his successors seem not to have been quite so aware of this requirement. Instead, they tended to rely more on the people of the east side. This can be largely attributed to the crucial political role that some of the commanders of the east side played, particularly in the matter of succession.⁹³ Consequently, as one may conclude, the rise in status of these commanders must have reflected favourably on the *abnā'* who followed them and who lived on the same side of the city, to the extent that they came to represent the elite of the standing army in Baghdad, who consequently were able to maintain, if not gain more of, the social and financial privileges that their fathers had enjoyed before them. Meanwhile, on the other side of the river, many of the *abnā'* there not only found themselves outside of the 'Abbāsīd military establishment, but also lost much of the high status and privileges that their ancestors possessed at the beginning of 'Abbāsīd rule.⁹⁴

The ultimate effect of this distinction in position and privileges was not only the social divide that occurred between the *abnā'* population, but, more important, the development over time of jealousy and dissatisfaction, especially among the

⁹²Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 429-30. (English translation quoted from, M. Fishbein, *The History of Ṭabarī*, vol. 31, pp. 110-12.)

⁹³ The three Khurāsānī families who played the most vital role in the matter of succession after the reign of al-Manṣūr were those of 'Alī b. 'Īsā b. Māhān, Yaḥyā b. Khālīd al-Barmakī, and Khāzīm b. Khuzaymah. On the role they played, see Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 206, 209, 232, 455. According to topographical sources, all of these were residents of al-Raṣāfah. See e.g. Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, pp. 22-4.

Ḥarbiyah, who, during the civil war, saw the *abnā'* of the east side acting contrary to their own interests.⁹⁵

Describing the role they played during the civil war, sources clearly indicate that both elements of *abnā'* sided with al-Amīn more for their own interests than because of their love for and loyalty to the Caliph. While the eastern *abnā'* fought to protect their privileges which they perceived to be under threat from al-Ma'mūn's new Khurāsānīs, the western *abnā'* did so as a means to regain the position which they had lost. Therefore, both sides were ready not only to withdraw their support from the Caliph, but also to turn against him, when they perceived him to be acting contrary to their interests.⁹⁶

With the defeat of al-Amīn and the fall of Baghdad, the *abnā'* continued to form the bulk of the 'Abbāsid fighting force in Baghdad.⁹⁷ But, with their well-honed military skills and their uncertain commitment to the new authority, the *abnā'* became a very disruptive element in Baghdad, especially with the inability of the

⁹⁴ This is clearly illustrated by the speech of Asad al-Ḥarbī. See Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 29-30.

⁹⁵ See e.g. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 429-30.

⁹⁶ Sources indicate that the *abnā'* of the east side, under the leadership of al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī, turned against Caliph al-Amīn when they felt that he started to show some signs of favouring the Arabs (*Zawāqil*) at their expense. Meanwhile, the *abnā'* of the west side, under the leadership of Muḥammad b. Abī Khālid, who had experienced a rise in status after they had saved the Caliph from al-Ḥusayn, soon turned against him later when they felt that their position was beginning to be threatened by the inclination of the Caliph toward his new Baghdadi recruits. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 430-2, 493-4. For more details on the *abnā'* during the civil war, see Kennedy, *Abbasid Caliphate*, pp. 142-8. As for the *Zawāqil*, they were largely of Qaysī tribesmen, who were known for brigandage. As for the term itself, it seems to be derived from the way they tied their turbans. See discussions on pp. 56-57.

⁹⁷ Sources estimate their number at the end of the civil war at 125,000, comprising both cavalry and infantry. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 550; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 430.

disruptive element in Baghdad, especially with the inability of the new authority to pay their salaries regularly.⁹⁸

After his return to Baghdad in 204/819, Caliph al-Ma'mūn tried to establish his authority and bring order to the city, which had been in disarray since the time of the civil conflict. To achieve this end, he sought first a reconciliation with the *abnā'* by winning over the side of 'Īsā b. Muḥammad b. Abī Khālīd, who became, after the end of the civil war, the most influential person among the *abnā'* community in Baghdad. Nevertheless, al-Ma'mūn seems also to have understood the expediency of draining as much as possible of the *abnā'*'s energy, and there was no better way to do so than to send them on far-flung military campaigns against the Caliphate's enemies. Thus, in 205/821, al-Ma'mūn appointed 'Īsā b. Muḥammad as governor of Armenia and Adharbayjān, and instructed him to take with him all of the *abnā'* who resided on his side of Baghdad and who were involved in local disturbances, to face the rebel forces of Bābak in Adharbayjān.⁹⁹ Despite their defeat and the great losses they suffered at the hands of Bābak's forces, the *abnā'* continued to be present as a distinct military group within the 'Abbāsid central army until the time of al-Mu'taṣim, when they started to become eclipsed by the growing numbers and

⁹⁸ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 495-7, 543-4, 546, 548-9, 553-5, 557, 570-1.

⁹⁹ Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 462; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 580; Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 356.

influence of the Turks in the army and the shift of the capital from Baghdad to Sāmarrā'.¹⁰⁰

1.3 The Arabs¹⁰¹

The cause of the success of the 'Abbāsid revolution in overthrowing the Umayyads can be safely attributed to the disturbed balance of power that existed between the northern tribes (Muḍarites) and the southern tribes (Yamanites), and the inclination of the latter to the 'Abbāsid side first in Khurāsān and later in Iraq and Syria.¹⁰²

The campaigns of conquest were naturally disruptive of the long-settled patterns of Arabian society, as they entailed a shift from Bedouin to urban ways of life, as different tribes settled together, first in garrison towns and later in the cities of the conquered lands. It might have been expected that this disruption and resettlement would tend to weaken tribal loyalty and so work to diminish rivalries and jealousies between the different tribes that were now forced to live together. However, since

¹⁰⁰Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 17; Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 416. As far as one can tell, the last mention of the *abnā'* within the formation of the 'Abbāsid regular forces was in 220/835, when, as al-Ṭabarī relates (*Tārīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 12, 14), a person known as 'Alwayah al-A'war (the One-Eyed), one of the *abnā'* commanders, was amongst the military leaders who participated in the war against Bābak al-Khurramī and was killed in action at the same.

¹⁰¹It is almost certain that when Muslim historians such as al-Ṭabarī mention the Arab tribal forces of Muḍar, Yaman, and Rabī'ah as part of the 'Abbāsid central forces in the time of Caliph al-Manṣūr, they are referring to the Arab tribesmen of Iraq and Syria who joined the 'Abbāsids at a later stage and not to the Arabs of Khurāsān, who, even after the establishment of the 'Abbāsid regime, remained a distinct group within those known as *ahl Khurāsān* or the *Khurāsāniyah*. On the politico-social distinction between the Arabs of Khurāsān and the Arabs of Iraq and Syria, see Sharon, "Reform", p. 131.

¹⁰²Goitein (*Studies*, p. 155) notes that the Umayyad State fell apart once the Syrian imperial army lost its *esprit de corps* when tribal conflicts leaked into its ranks.

the settlement in these cities was organized on a tribal basis, each tribe living in its own quarter, tribal cohesion was in fact strengthened rather than weakened.¹⁰³ This tribal organization of the cities consolidated the tribes as distinct units as it prevented much inter-tribal mixing. However, the new closeness of the tribes in their separate quarters made friction inevitable between the tribes, which caused in turn unrest and feuding among them. In Syria, tribal feuding arose between the dominant Yamanites and the Qaysites of Muḍar.¹⁰⁴ This tribal feuding began when the two tribes competed with each other to gain the favour of the authority in the region and so obtain appointments to governmental posts, which were a source of both wealth and influence. In actual practice, the authority chose most often to rely on the Yamanites as they were the stronger of the two factions. Although this strengthened relations between the Yamanites and the authority, it caused the Qaysites, who found themselves deprived of office and influence, to turn against the authority as well as to increase in their hostility toward the Yamanites.

The policy of Mu'āwiyah (41-60/661-680), the first Umayyad Caliph, had been in the same vein. He had favoured the Yamanites so that he could rely upon them in

¹⁰³ Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 338-50; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 4, pp. 44-5; al-'Alī, *Tanẓīmāt*, pp. 34-40; Deihani, *al-Khūfā*, pp. 101-16.

¹⁰⁴ A look at the pattern of settlement of Arab tribes in Syria shows that the Yamanites constituted the majority of the Arab population, especially in areas such as Palestine, Jordan, Damascus, Ḥims, and Ḥamāt. Meanwhile, the Qaysites were dominant only in Qinnasrīn and its environs as well as in Jazīrah. The prior occupation of the region by Yamanite tribes meant that it held a special interest for the conquering Yamanites. When a group of Yamanites came to Caliph 'Umar I asking him to allow them to participate in the conquest, 'Umar asked them which fronts were preferable to them. The Yamanites replied, "Syria, the land of our ancestors." Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 3, p. 462.

confronting 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib in the battle of Ṣiffīn in 337/658.¹⁰⁵ This reliance on and favouritism towards the Yamanites was only enhanced after the battle of Marj Rāhiṭ in 64/684, in which the northern tribes, who were bitterly disappointed by the Umayyads' pro-Yamanite policy, gave their full support to Ibn al-Zubayr, while the Yamanites retained their loyalty to the Umayyad family.¹⁰⁶ Although Caliph 'Abd al-Malik (65-86/685-705) was able to attract the Qaysites to the Umayyad side, particularly after reaching an agreement with their leader, Zufar b. al-Ḥārith al-Kilābī, he was careful that this was not at the expense of the Yamanites and their privileges.¹⁰⁷

However, the tradition of Yamanite support for the Umayyads was broken under Caliph Yazīd II (101-105/720-724), who initiated an openly pro-Qaysite policy at the expense of the Yamanites, who were devastated by the death of Yazīd b. al-Muhallab and the collapse of his attempted revolt in 102/720.¹⁰⁸ Yazīd II was succeeded by his brother Hishām (105-125/724-744). As a means of breaking the growing power of the Qays tribes that developed under his brother, Hishām began his rule by instituting a pro-Yamanite policy. Nevertheless, later, in 120/738, he tended more

¹⁰⁵ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 5, pp. 11-32; Minqarī, *Ṣiffīn*, p. 232. Concerning the favour shown by Mu'āwiyah to the Yamanites, see Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, vol. 18, pp. 69-70; Minqarī, *Ṣiffīn*, pp. 292-3.

¹⁰⁶ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 5, p. 537; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 258; Ibn Khayyāt, *Tārīkh*, pp. 199-200.

¹⁰⁷ 'Abd Dixon, *Umayyad Caliphate*, p. 96.

¹⁰⁸ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 6, pp. 595-7; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, pp. 310-1. On the nature of Yazīd's revolt, see Shaban, *'Abbāsīd Revolution*, pp. 81-2, 93-5. On the history of the family of al-Muhallab, see Nāfi', al-'Abbūd, *Al al-Muhallab b. Abī Ṣufrah wa Dawrihim fī al-Tārīkh ḥattā al-Qarn al-Rābi' al-Ḥijrī* (Baghdad, 1979).

towards the Qaysites. His suddenly new anti-Yamanite policy was clearly illustrated by the dismissal of Khālīd al-Qasrī and the appointment of Yūsuf b. 'Umar of Qays as the governor of Iraq and all of the Eastern Provinces.¹⁰⁹ The anger and frustration of the Yamanite tribes in Syria as well as in Iraq reached its climax in the time of Caliph al-Walīd II (125-126/744-744), whose hatred of the Yamanites caused him virtually to sell Khālīd b. al-Qasrī to Yūsuf b. 'Umar, who tortured and executed him in Kūfah in 126/743.¹¹⁰ In addition to his quarrel with the Yamanites, al-Walīd also took a hostile stance against other members of the Umayyad family, particularly the sons of 'Abd al-Malik, Walīd and Hishām.¹¹¹

It was not long, however, before a serious revolt broke out, headed by Yazīd b. Walīd b. 'Abd al-Malik, who was supported by the Yamanite tribes in Syria. This revolution ended with the death of Walīd II and the inauguration of Yazīd III in 126/744. Six months later, Yazīd died and was succeeded by his brother Ibrāhīm, who followed in the footsteps of his brother by recognizing only the Yamanite tribes. Ibrāhīm, however, was soon opposed by Marwān b. Muhammad, the governor of Armenia, who was supported by the Qaysites, whose interests had suffered during the short reign of Yazīd III. In 127/745, Marwān was able to seize power and, as a token of his admiration for his Qaysite supporters, he decided to shift his capital from

¹⁰⁹ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 142-50; Ya'qūbī, vol. 2, pp. 322-4; Ibn Khaldūn, *al-'Ibar*, vol. 3, p. 205; Sharon, *'Abbāsīd Revolution*, p. 39.

¹¹⁰ Islamic sources indicate that Yūsuf b. 'Umar paid the Caliph 50 million *dirhams* to have Khālīd handed over to him. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 233-4; Dīnawarī, *Akhhbār*, pp. 347-8; Dhahabī, *Kitāb al-'Ibar*, vol. 1, p. 162.

Damascus to Ḥarrān in Jazīrah. At this point the Yamanite tribes found that they had no other option but to side with the opposition, who happened to be the 'Abbāsīds, less for the love of their cause, than for their hatred of the Qaysites and Marwān who supported them.¹¹²

The critical role that the Yamanite tribes played for the 'Abbāsīds was evident, not just in Khurāsān, but also during their confrontation with the Umayyad armies in Iraq and Syria. The fall of many important cities such as Kūfah, Baṣrah, Wāsiṭ, and Damascus without any real resistance came above all as a result of the support of the Yamanite tribesmen for the 'Abbāsīds. The 'Abbāsīds in their turn were able to win their support, on the one hand by exploiting the traditional enmity between the Yamanites and Marwān, and on the other by promising them high status in the new-born dynasty.¹¹³

With respect to the Qaysite tribes, who were the main supporters of Caliph Marwān b. Muhammad, they seemed to realize that the end of the Umayyad rule was imminent. The hopelessness of any further resistance became clear after the collapse of the Umayyad defences in Khurāsān and later in Iraq, and the subsequent defeat of

¹¹¹Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 231.

¹¹²Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, pp. 246-7.

¹¹³Dīnawarī, *Akḥbār*, p. 368, Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 417, 453-4; *Akḥbār*, pp. 371-2; Ibn Qutaybah, *Imāmāh*, pt. 2, p. 151; Azdī, *Tārīkh*, pp. 158-71; Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, p. 261; Ibn Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 16.

the vast and well-equipped forces of Marwān in the battle of Zāb in 132/750.¹¹⁴ Therefore, fearing the consequences that would result from such support, many of the Qaysites in cities such as Mawṣil, Qinnasrīn, and Ḥarrān chose to withdraw their support from Marwān and declare their full subordination to the new regime.¹¹⁵

With the end of the revolutionary period and immediately upon their accession to power, the 'Abbāsids had to deal with the Arab tribal forces, who for convenience can be classified into two categories. First, there were the Arab warriors in the various provinces who were already enrolled in the Umayyads' *Dīwān* and whose role in supporting the 'Abbāsids was confined mainly to matters of politics and logistics. The second category was a combination of two groups of Arab fighting forces: first, those who once had been part of the active Syrian army (*ahl al-Shām*) prior to their deserting to the 'Abbāsīd side, especially during the fighting in Iraq¹¹⁶ and, second, a considerable number of urban Arab tribesmen, mostly Iraqis, who, despite their expert martial skills, were not, in fact, enrolled in the *Dīwān*, at least at that time.¹¹⁷ Unlike the Arab warriors of the first category, the latter combination of fighting forces did join the ranks of the Khurāsānī forces in the actual fighting

¹¹⁴The battle of Zāb is discussed in great detail in Azdī, *Tārīkh*, pp. 125-33.

¹¹⁵Ma'sūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, p. 260; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 439-40.

¹¹⁶Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, p. 368; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 419, 454.

against the Umayyad forces in Iraq and in the pursuit of Caliph Marwān b. Muḥammad. In this regard, for example, the actual slaying of Marwān in the short, sharp battle that took place in the village of Abū Būṣīr in Egypt is attributed to a Baṣran, while his subsequent beheading is attributed to a Kūfan pomegranate seller.¹¹⁸

During the reign of the first 'Abbāsīd Caliph, the 'Abbāsīd authority continued to adhere to the policy, that had been instituted during the revolution, of maintaining the *status quo* and accepting the co-operation of all those who agreed to support them. Thus, the Arab warriors in the various provinces such as Jazīrah, Syria, and Egypt retained many of their former positions and privileges, including that of the '*aṭā'*', which continued to be paid in accordance with the lists of the Umayyad *Dīwāns* that were kept in each region.¹¹⁹ On some occasions these provincial tribal forces even joined forces with the 'Abbāsīd central army, the Khurāsānīs, in military campaigns against the Byzantines at this early stage of the 'Abbāsīd rule. Sources, for example, point out that 'Abdallāh b. 'Alī, an uncle of Caliph Abū al-'Abbās and al-Manṣūr,

¹¹⁷We know, for example, that Muḥammad b. Khālīd al-Qasrī along with his fellow Yemenite tribesmen in Kūfah, who had joined the 'Abbāsīd revolutionary forces, were not at that time enrolled in the Umayyad *Dīwān*. Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, p. 368. As to their number, while *Akhbār* (pp. 355-6) estimates it at 1,000, Balādhurī (*Ansāb*, vol. 3, p. 138) exaggerates it, citing 11,000. For more on the role of the Iraqis in supporting the 'Abbāsīds against the Umayyads in Iraq, see Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 417-8, 420, 426; *Akhbār*, pp. 355-6, 366-8.

¹¹⁸Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 441-2.

¹¹⁹On the Iraqi warriors, see Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 426; Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. 3, p. 143; K. al-'Uyūn, p. 200; Ābī, *Nathr al-Durar*, vol. 3, p. 80; Ibn Abī Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah*, vol. 7, p. 157. On the Syrian warriors, see Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. 3, p. 147. On the Egyptians, see Kindī, *Wulāt*, p. 122.

led a great army on a summer expedition (*ṣā'ifah*) against the Byzantines in 136/754. This force was made up of Khurāsānīs, Syrians, and men from Jazīrah and Mawṣil.¹²⁰

With regard to the Arab warriors of the second category, their integration with the Khurāsānīs was not confined to the revolutionary period, but continued after the establishment of the 'Abbāsid regime. Both the Khurāsānīs and those Arab elements who came to form the central army of the new-born 'Abbāsid state, were enrolled in one *Dīwān* under the framework of the term 'Khurāsānī'.¹²¹ This compound military bloc seems to have remained intact until the year 151/768 when, for unclear reasons, the different elements composing it rioted against Caliph al-Manṣūr in Baghdad. Historical sources point out that during this event al-Manṣūr expressed to Qutham b. al-'Abbās, an old member of the 'Abbāsid family, his great concern that the army might reunite and turn against him. When al-Manṣūr asked for his advice, the latter asked the Caliph to give him until the following day to come up with a scheme that would prevent such an alliance between the troops. Qutham went home and ordered his slave (*ghulām*) to wait until the next day, when he would be at the Caliph's court among high-ranking courtiers (*aṣḥāb al-marātib*), and then persistently ask the following question: "Which of the tribes is more noble (*ashraf*), Yaman or Muḍar?" When the slave asked this question at court, as part of the plan, Qutham tried to avoid answering the question, but when the slave persisted in demanding an answer,

¹²⁰Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 472.

Qutham responded by saying, “Muḍar is more honourable because the Prophet came from among them, the Qur’ān is among them, the house of Allāh [the *Ka’bah*] is in their land, and from them comes the Caliph of Allāh.”¹²² This answer outraged the Yamanite tribesmen and aroused great tension between the two tribes. The tradition concludes that by this skilful political manoeuvre, which was appreciated by al-Manṣūr, the army was divided into four factions: Muḍar, Yaman, Khurāsānī, and Rabī’ah. Also, acting on advice from Qutham, the Caliph divided his troops between Baghdad and al-Raṣāfah, on the east bank of the river Tigris. Therefore, should the forces on one side rebel, the Caliph would be able to use those on the other side to oppose them.¹²³

Although Caliph al-Manṣūr was able to fragment the unity of his troops, he must have fully understood the risks involved in such a tactic, as it was one of the main organizational factors that had led to the dissolution of the Umayyad standing army and consequently the state itself. Al-Manṣūr, therefore, seems to have sought a permanent solution to this danger by sifting from his army those tribal troops, who proved to be still affected by ‘the plague of tribalism’ (*aṣābiyah*). He wished thereby to keep close at hand and at his disposal only the Khurāsānīs, who, since taking up residence in Khurāsān, had left behind their tribal fanaticism and adopted

¹²¹ Jahshiyārī, *Wuzarā’*, p. 94; Ibn al-Muqaffā’, *Rasā’il*, pp. 124-5.

¹²² Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 38-9.

¹²³ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 39.

instead a regional unity.¹²⁴ This solution appears to have been initiated in 154/771 when, as it seems responsible to deduce, al-Manṣūr dispatched all of the tribal troops, along with others from Iraq and Syria, under the command of Yazīd b. Ḥātim al-Muhallabī of Azd on a military campaign against the Khārijites in Ifrīqiya.¹²⁵ Unlike the conclusion of previous campaigns, however, when the army would return to its homeland, this time the troops would settle there permanently after the campaign.¹²⁶ By this measure Caliph al-Manṣūr not only removed the tribal elements from his central army in Baghdad, but most importantly, he put an end to any future admission of tribesmen from Iraq, Jazīrah, and Syria into the 'Abbāsid military institution.

It is worth noting that al-Manṣūr's stipulations *vis-à-vis* the Arab forces in Baghdad were part of an overall policy that he implemented with regard to the Arab provincial forces, particularly those of Iraq, Jazīrah, and Syria. The end of the conquests, especially on the Byzantine front, meant that the 'Abbāsid central government no longer needed a large reserve of manpower. Rather, it needed only a central army who could suppress any internal uprisings and mount occasional expeditions against the Byzantines. Moreover, unlike his Umayyad predecessors, al-Manṣūr, and indeed all of the 'Abbāsid Caliphs after him, tended to rely increasingly on the non-Arab elements in their armies, who, in contrast to the Arab tribesmen, were far more

¹²⁴Sharon, *Black Banners*, pp. 51-2; Lassner, *Shaping*, p. 122.

¹²⁵Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 44; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 206.

¹²⁶Kennedy, *Abbasid Caliphate*, pp. 191-2.

disciplined and free of any tribal 'aṣabiyyah. All of these issues incited Caliph al-Manṣūr to undertake the demilitarization of the Arab provinces, particularly Iraq, Jazīrah, and Syria. The policy was carried out in two ways: first, by emptying these areas of as much as possible of their military manpower by permanently transferring large numbers of them to the frontier zones with Byzantium, India, Ifrīqiya, Armenia, and Adharbayjān;¹²⁷ and, second, by abandoning the old system of 'aṭā' and voluntary service, which had been the main mechanism in the recruitment of Muslim armies since the time of 'Umar, and replacing it with a new system of *artizāq* and professionalism. In other words, this meant that only those who participated practically in military service would be eligible to receive stipends.¹²⁸ This dramatic change in the organization of the Muslim military institution, which was accompanied by the halt of the conquests and increased reliance by the 'Abbāsids on non-Arab elements in the army, led to a situation where many of the Arab tribesmen who remained in their homelands, particularly in Syria and Jazīrah, found themselves suddenly without stipends, food subsidies, and booty. In other words, the main source of income, which these Arab tribesmen had relied on since the rise of Islam, was cut off. This led over time to the transformation of many of these highly skilled former troops (who were found mainly among the Qaysites in Jazīrah and Syria) into brigands or what came to be known in Islamic sources as

¹²⁷Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, pp. 371-2, 426; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 199, 223, 236, 246.

¹²⁸The recipients were called *murtazaqah* (sing. *murtazaq*). More detailed discussion of this issue can be found in Ch. Two, where we discuss the *Dīvān* and soldiers' pay.

zawāqil.¹²⁹ This was a way of life that they seem to have adopted not only as a means of livelihood, but also in order to express their bitterness and disaffection with the central authority.¹³⁰

The absence of Arab tribal elements within the main body of the 'Abbāsid central armies remained noticeable from the time of Caliph al-Manṣūr until the time of the civil war. While al-Ma'mūn put all his weight behind the new Khurāsānīs, Caliph al-Amīn was compelled, after the series of defeats suffered by the *abnā'*, to turn desperately for support to the Arab blocs in Syria and Jazīrah as the final resort in preventing the deterioration of his military position. Nevertheless, his attempt was

¹²⁹ The term *Zawāqil* is associated in the Islamic sources with the word *mutalaṣṣiṣah* (robbers). See, for example, Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 262, 425-7. What indicates that the *zawāqil* were Arabs, mainly Qaysites, and that they were once part of the regime is the names of their leaders. The two most renowned of their leaders were al-'Abbās b. Zufar al-Hilālī and Naṣr b. Shabath al-'Uqaylī, both of whom were of Qays. As for al-'Abbās, he was most probably the son of Zufar b. 'Āṣim al-Hilālī, who was the governor of Ḥalab in the time of Caliph Abū al-'Abbās. Although Zufar supported 'Abdallāh b. 'Alī against al-Manṣūr, he was later pardoned and became one of the closest courtiers of al-Manṣūr. His high status endured until the end of al-Mahdī's reign when, in 163/780, he was discharged from his position as governor of Jazīrah. Thereafter we find no mention of him in the sources and it seems most probable that his status and that of his sons deteriorated during al-Rashīd's time, especially after the tribal struggle between Yaman and Qays in Jazīrah and Syria in 176/793. As for Shabath, al-Azdī (*Tārīkh*, p. 328) indicates that he was the governor of Jazīrah in the time of al-Amīn and was discharged from his post in 198/814. On Zufar, see Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 475; vol. 8, pp. 50, 53, 132, 147, 149, 427. On Naṣr, see *ibid.*, vol. 8, pp. 427, 527, 579, 580-1, 598-9. For more details on the *Zawāqil*, see EI², s.v. "*Zawāqil*"; Paul M. Cobb, *White Banners. Contention in 'Abbāsid Syria, 750-880*. Albany, 2001.

faced by great resistance from the *abnā'*, who viewed these Arabs as rivals whose presence would constitute a great threat to their privileges and interests both in the army and in the 'Abbāsīd court.¹³¹ Therefore, it was not long after, when both parties came together to form an alliance in order to face al-Ma'mūn's army, that a quarrel broke out between the two, which ended in bloody fighting, after which the Syrians decided to withdraw their support and return to their homeland.¹³² As a result of this decision, the Arabs of Syria lost the long-awaited opportunity to regain their position in the military institutions, which had been lost since the days of Caliph al-Manṣūr.

It is worthy of note, however, that while the Syrian Arab tribes failed to establish a foothold in the 'Abbāsīd military institution, another obscure Arab element succeeded in emerging as a major component of the army of Baghdad during the civil war. These were the Bedouin (*A'rāb*, sing. *A'rābī*), whose mode of life consisted of constant movement from one place to another in search of better

¹³⁰The best example of this is the revolt in Jazīrah of Naṣr b. Shabath al-'Uqaylī, the leader of the *zawāqil* in Raqqā. His revolt, the main supporters of which were Arabs, started in 198/814 and intensified during the reign of al-Ma'mūn and until the year 209/825. Naṣr's revolt expressed the widespread grievance and resentment that the Arabs felt toward the 'Abbāsīd policy of favouring non-Arabs over the Arabs. This was clearly shown when a group of Tālibīs tried to persuade Naṣr to support their cause, but Naṣr refused saying, "My inclination is toward the 'Abbāsīd family and the reason I am fighting them is only to defend the Arabs, because they [the 'Abbāsīds] have put the *'ajam* over them [the Arabs]." Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 334. For more on the revolt of Naṣr, see Shākir, *Banī al-'Abbās*, vol. 1, pp. 724-30; Kennedy, *Abbasid Caliphate*, p. 168. On the role of the *zawāqil* during the civil war, see Ayalon, "Reform", pp. 18-20; Kennedy, *Abbasid Caliphate*, pp. 142-3. On the term *zawāqil*, see Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, s.v., "zaqal"; Firūzābādī, *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*, p. 1305.

¹³¹Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 429; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 385.

¹³²Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 426-7; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, pp. 384-5.

pastures for their flocks.¹³³ Although the *A'rāb* were amongst the earlier Arab factions in Arabia to embrace Islam, yet they were never been part of the Muslim regular armies. This was owing to the fact that, since the days of the Prophet, the *A'rāb* had always resisted the desire of the Muslim authority that they abandon their nomadic life and join their urban-dwelling Muslim brothers (*ahl al-ḥāḍarah*) in a unity in which all would share equally in their collective responsibilities, including that of *jihād*.¹³⁴ On this account, the *A'rāb* were always viewed by the urbanized Muslims, as well as by Muslim jurists, as the most inferior group in Muslim society, as they were not only ignorant of the Islamic teachings (*Sharī'ah*) but were also reluctant to follow them.¹³⁵

With the expansion of Muslim conquests beyond the confines of Arabia, many of the *A'rāb* tribes were persuaded to leave their homelands and move toward the fertile areas of Iraq and Syria. Yet, unlike other Muslims who settled in the garrison towns (*amṣār*), many of the *A'rāb* tribes chose to continue their nomadic way of life, wandering around the outskirts of some of the main cities such as Kūfah, Baṣrah, Mawṣil, and Damascus. Like the Arab tribal townsmen, the *A'rāb* in Umayyad times served both on the side of rebel forces as well as in the Umayyad armies.¹³⁶ Nevertheless, even those who served in the Umayyad armies continued to be denied

¹³³Zubaydī, *Tāẓ al-'Arūs*, vol. 2, p. 214; Ibn Sallām, *Amwāl*, pp. 224, 227, 232, 240, 243.

¹³⁴Ibn Sallām, *Amwāl*, p. 240.

¹³⁵*Ibid.*

¹³⁶Kennedy, *The Caliphate*, p. 286.

the right to enlistment in the *Dīwān* and thus receipt of regular stipends.¹³⁷ Instead, in return for their services, the Umayyad authority either offered them their legal share of the plunder or, at times, would subsidize them to come and serve when called upon.¹³⁸

In early 'Abbāsid times, the first reference to the *A'rāb* comes during the advance of the revolutionary forces westward toward Iraq. Some of the 'Abbāsid commanders, such as Abū Salamah al-Khalāl, are reported to have appealed to the *A'rāb* who populated the areas around cities such as Kūfah, Baṣrah, and Mawṣil to join the 'Abbāsids' forces in their fight against the Umayyads.¹³⁹ Those *A'rāb* who are recorded as having responded to the appeal to join with the 'Abbāsid forces did so more for the love of plunder than on account of their devotion to the 'Abbāsid cause and, soon after the end of the revolutionary period, they disappeared completely from the ranks of the 'Abbāsid army.¹⁴⁰ But, during the civil war, sixty years after their first appearance on the 'Abbāsid side, the *A'rāb* suddenly re-emerged as a major element within the army of Baghdad.¹⁴¹ Their numbers were large and in a single campaign against al-Ma'mūn's forces they were able to put more than 20,000 men

¹³⁷ Ibn Sallam, *Amwāl*, p. 240.

¹³⁸ Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, p. 90.

¹³⁹ *Akḥbār*, pp. 355, 368.

¹⁴⁰ In fact, the *A'rāb*, especially those in Iraq, emerged in the early years of the 'Abbāsid rule as an unruly element engaging in highway robbery. Basawī, *al-Ma'rifah*, vol. 1, p. 157.

¹⁴¹ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 409, 412.

into the battlefield.¹⁴² Unlike the *abnā'*, whose loyalties fluctuated, the *A'rāb* stood firmly to the end behind Caliph al-Amīn. They defended him not only against outside threats but also against the *abnā'* and their attempts to blackmail the Caliph.¹⁴³ The role of the *A'rāb* in the 'Abbāsid central forces, however, soon ended with the fall of Baghdad and the death of al-Amīn. In fact, under al-Ma'mūn both the *A'rāb* and the Arab townsmen of Syria and Jazīrah were dismissed completely from the 'Abbāsid military establishment. In the case of the former, it was sufficient for one to be accused of being an *A'rābī* for the 'Abbāsid authority to dismiss him without hesitation.¹⁴⁴ Meanwhile, with regard to the urbanized Arabs of Syria and Jazīrah, al-Ma'mūn pursued a policy of turning them out of his military institutions irrespective of the tribes they belonged to.¹⁴⁵

The final blow to the Arabs in the 'Abbāsid military institution fell in the time of al-Mu'taṣim, the Caliph who was responsible for introducing Turks into the army on a large scale. Al-Mu'taṣim not only pursued the policy of turning the Arabs of Syria,

¹⁴²*Ibid.* p. 440.

¹⁴³*Ibid.* p. 412.

¹⁴⁴Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, pt. 2, pp. 206-7.

¹⁴⁵Sources reports that a man persistently appealed to Caliph al-Ma'mūn to regard the Arabs of Syria in the same manner as he regarded the '*ajam* of *ahl Khurāsān*. Al-Ma'mūn responded by saying, "By Allāh, I did not dismount the Qaysites from the backs of their horses until I saw that not a single *dirham* was left in my Treasury. As for Yaman, I have never loved them nor do they love me at all. As for Quḍā'ah, its chiefs are still waiting in anticipation of the Sufyānid and his revolt so they can become his partisans. As for Rabī'ah, they have been angry with Allāh ever since he sent his Prophet [Muḥammad] from among the Muḍar tribe. Of every two Khārijites who revolt, one must be from Rabī'ah. Let me go, and may Allāh curse you..." Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 652; Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 408.

Jazīrah, and Iraq out of the military establishment, but also dismissed the Arabs of Egypt, who, until his accession to power, had been the only Arab group that had been able to maintain its position in the old *Dīwān*.¹⁴⁶ By this decision, al-Mu'taṣim was simply taking the final step in abolishing the old *Dīwān*, the martial mechanism of which had, in fact, been deactivated a long time before. Accordingly, when contemporary writers such as al-Jāḥiẓ describe the composition of the 'Abbāsid fighting forces in the time of al-Mu'taṣim, they only mention three elements: the *Khurāsāniyah*, the *abnā'*, and the Turks.¹⁴⁷ It should be noted, however, that although the Arab tribal forces almost disappeared from the composition of the 'Abbāsid central armies, their presence was, nevertheless, obvious within the frontier armies in places such as Syria, Adharbayjān, Yaman, and Sind.

1.4 The *Mawālī*

Like many other terms of that time, the term *mawlā* (pl. *mawālī*) had a broad range of connotations and it is often extremely difficult to determine the social and legal status of a person described by this term in the early chronicles. The *mawlā* could be a friend, confidant, kinsman (*ibn 'amm*), supporter, neighbour, ally by marriage,

¹⁴⁶Kindī, *Wulāt*, p. 217; Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, vol. 1, p. 94.

¹⁴⁷See e.g. Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 62.

manumitter, protector, freeman, lover, religious master, non-Arab convert to Islam, as well as Lord or God within the Qur'ānic perspective.¹⁴⁸

During the early period of Islam, it is possible to distinguish two main categories of persons called *mawālī*. The first were *mawālī al-'itāqah* (clients by manumission). These consisted of the freed slaves who, although manumitted, continued to retain a special relationship (in legal terminology referred to as *walā'*) with the family and the tribe of their former masters.¹⁴⁹ The second category of *mawālī* were those known as *mawālī al-muwālāh* (*mawālī* under contractual clientage) or *mawālī al-Islām*. Basically, this type of *walā'* or clientage derived its main principles from the system of *mawlā al-ḥilf* or *mawlā al-yamīn* (confederate by oath), which existed in pre-Islamic times. Nevertheless, its nature was altered after the rise of Islam and the subsequent conquests. In pre-Islamic times, those seeking clientship in an Arab tribe were usually full-blooded Arabs from a weaker group seeking protection from a stronger group. However, in the time of the Islamic conquests, the term *mawlā* was no longer applied to foreigners with full Arab status, but was employed in reference to those free persons from among the conquered people who converted to Islam and affiliated to an Arab tribe.¹⁵⁰ One of the prime legal differences between the *mawālī*

¹⁴⁸ Qur'ān, 47: 11; 6: 62; 19: 5; Ibn Athīr, *Gharīb al-Ḥadīth*, vol. 5, p. 227; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, s.v. "wily".

¹⁴⁹ The freed slave in his case would be designated a *mawlā* and would have the status of slave and freeman. The manumitter, on the other hand, was also designated a *mawlā*, but, in order to distinguish between the two, the freeman would sometimes be referred to as the inferior (*al-mawlā al-asfal*), while the manumitter would be called the superior *mawlā* (*al-mawlā al-a'lā*). Forand, "Relation", p. 59.

¹⁵⁰ *ET*², s.v. "Mawlā"; Pipes, "Mawlas", p. 138; Forand, "Relation", p. 60; al-'Alī, *Tanzīmāt*, p. 67.

of the two categories was that while the *walā'* of manumission was binding, the *walā' al-muwālāh* was not. Therefore, the people who fell within the second category were able to terminate their clientage ties with their Arab patron whenever they wanted, but the position became permanent thereafter.¹⁵¹ Meanwhile, in both of types of clientage, the *mawālī* had to acquire an affiliation with an Arab family or tribe if they wanted membership in Arab society. Also, both of them had to bear the title *mawālā* as a means to distinguish them from the pure Arab tribesman (*ṣamīm* or *ṣarīh*).

Although the settlement of the Arabs in the subdued territories and the adoption of an urban mode of life eased to some extent the power of the *walā'*, yet it did not lose much of its social, fiscal, and political value throughout Umayyad times. This could be attributed to the fact that during this period the tribe continued to be the fundamental basis for the organization of Muslim society, as well as the main passage to public as well as governmental privileges.¹⁵² Nevertheless, with the coming of the 'Abbāsids to power, the institution of *walā'* underwent a radical transformation. From the outset of their rule, the 'Abbāsids deprived the Arabs of their conventional social, political, and fiscal privileges as the tribal factor lost its distinguishing value in the 'Abbāsid military and political life. Access to governmental offices, privileges, and power was no longer the exclusive prerogative of Arabians, but rested to a great extent on participation in the 'Abbāsid revolution as

¹⁵¹ Al-'Alī, *Tanzīm al-mawālī*, p. 68; Forand, "Relation", p. 60; *EP²*, s.v., "Mawālā".

well as ties to the 'Abbāsid household. Within this new framework non-Arab Muslims held high positions in all state institutions, while at the same time the majority of the Arabs and *mawālī* found equality as ordinary citizens. Because Muslim society no longer constituted by Arab privileges, non-Arab Muslims no longer felt the need to acquire a patron for membership of it. Freedmen continued to become clients of their manumitters, but non-Arab Muslims no longer aspired to acquire a tribal clientage.¹⁵³ Accordingly, the term *mawlā* ("client") in the 'Abbāsid society of Baghdad became a word applied to a great extent to a manumitted slave more than to non-Arab Muslim free person.¹⁵⁴

To identify the *mawālī* who served in the early 'Abbāsid armies, it is convenient to classify them into two categories according to the patrons to whom they pledged their absolute loyalty and on whose behalf they entered into warfare. The first category consisted of those who were attached to the 'Abbāsid Caliphs. Like the Umayyads, the 'Abbāsid Caliphs also acquired vast numbers of slaves. Caliph al-Manṣūr, for example, who is said to have started the custom of collecting slaves in large numbers, is reported to have said in a conversation with his son and heir, al-Mahdī, that he had gathered for the latter more *mawālī* than any other Caliph before

¹⁵² Al-'Alī, *Tanzīīmāt*, pp. 77f.; *EF*², s.v. "Mawlā".

¹⁵³ *EF*², s.v. "Mawlā"; Pipes, "Mawlas", p. 153.

¹⁵⁴ Ayalon, "Reform", p. 1. Pipes ("Mawlas," p. 153) correctly comments on this by saying, "While the mawla-convert status lost its significance almost overnight, the persons called mawla-converts probably kept this title until their death. Persons who converted after 132/750 did not become mawlas unless they were slaves, but it took decades (till the 170/790's, say) for the mawla-convert status to disappear."

him.¹⁵⁵ One report estimates their number at 40,000.¹⁵⁶ Another example of a similarly large number of slaves belonging to an 'Abbāsid Caliph relates to the time of Caliph al-Rashīd. After his death, an inventory of his possessions listed 50,000 swords of the *shākīrīyah* (personal guards)¹⁵⁷ and *ghulāms*.¹⁵⁸ Generally, 'Abbāsid Caliphs acquired slaves through three different means: through war, when the victorious commanders sent a *khums*, one fifth of the spoil due to the Caliph;¹⁵⁹ through arrangements with local authorities in the Islamic provinces to send part of the taxes in the form of slaves;¹⁶⁰ and, finally, through purchase, which was the principal means of acquiring slaves in 'Abbāsid times.¹⁶¹ In contrast to the Central Asian slaves in the time of al-Mu'taṣim, who came almost exclusively from a single region, early 'Abbāsid slaves were of many origins, including Turks, Nubians, Persians, Rūmīs, Ethiopians, Berbers, and even Arabian captives.¹⁶²

The military role played by the 'Abbāsid Caliphs' *mawālī* during the early years of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate was almost totally confined to commanding the troops. The

¹⁵⁵ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 106.

¹⁵⁶ Ibn al-Zubayr, *al-Dhakhā'ir wa al-Tuḥaf*, p. 213.

¹⁵⁷ For more on the term *shākīrīyah*, see *EF*, s.v. "Shākiriyya"; Bosworth, *The History of Ṭabarī*, vol. 33, p. 179, n. 506; Shaban, *'Abbāsid Revolution*, p. 58.

¹⁵⁸ Ibn al-Zubayr, *al-Dhakhā'ir wa al-Tuḥaf*, p. 217.

¹⁵⁹ Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 363.

¹⁶⁰ Jahshiyārī, *Wuzarā'*, pp. 283, 286; Ibn Ṭayfūr, *Baghdād*, p. 95; Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Masālik*, p. 39; Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan*, p. 340; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 5, p. 71; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, vol. 1, p. 173.

¹⁶¹ Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 27; Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 4, p. 53; Muqaddasī, *al-Bad'*, vol. 6, p. 112; Ibn Taghribirdī, *al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, vol. 2, p. 233.

first reference to their playing such a role comes in 137/755, when al-Manṣūr sent his *mawlā*, al-Muhalhil b. Ṣafwān, at the head of 2,000 elite troops to put down the Khārijite rebellion led by al-Mulabbid b. Ḥarmalah al-Shaybānī.¹⁶³ In 145/763, Abā al-Asad, who is described as a *mawlā* of Caliph al-Manṣūr, is reported to have been one of the commanders who were sent against Ibrāhīm b. 'Abdallāh in Baṣrah.¹⁶⁴ Moreover, in 155/772, al-Layth, who is also described as a *mawlā* of Caliph al-Manṣūr, led an army to contain the rebellion of Farghānah's ruler.¹⁶⁵ By the time of Caliph al-Mahdī, however, the number of the *mawālī* seems to have increased to the point where the authority was able to turn them into a distinct military bloc within the central armed forces. In a military campaign against the Byzantines in 159/776, the 'Abbāsid army's vanguard was composed exclusively of *mawālī* recruits led by al-Ḥasan al-Waṣīf, a *mawlā* of Caliph al-Mahdī.¹⁶⁶

In addition to the large group of *mawālī* who were linked directly to the 'Abbāsid Caliphs, there were other large bodies of *mawālī* who served in the army and were affiliated to certain individuals, especially amongst the state dignitaries, including members of the 'Abbāsid family and army commanders. Among those was 'Īsā b. 'Alī, whose *mawālī* in the time al-Manṣūr are said to have numbered around 4,000

¹⁶² Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 99.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 495.

¹⁶⁴ Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 360.

¹⁶⁵ Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 387.

¹⁶⁶ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 116; Ibn Taghribirdī, *al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, vol. 2, p. 34.

and to have lived with him in his official dwelling.¹⁶⁷ The first reference to their being used in a military campaign comes in 162/779, when 'Īsā b. 'Alī led a corps of his *mawālī*, along with the local people of Mar'ash, in the defence of the city against the Byzantines, during which eight of his *mawālī* are reported to have lost their lives in battle.¹⁶⁸ Another important figure was Khāzim b. Khuzaymah al-Tamīmī. In 134/752, Khāzim set out at the head of an army to put down the uprising of Shaybān, the Khārijite rebel in 'Umān. Besides the 700 men sent by Caliph Abū al-'Abbās, Khāzim's army also included many men of his house, cousins, his *mawālī*, and men from Marw al-Rūdh whom he knew and trusted.¹⁶⁹ As for his son Khuzaymah, who most likely inherited the loyalty of the *mawālī* of his father, it is indicated that his *mawālī* numbered about 5,000 men, whose martial skills he employed not only for military purposes but also for political objectives.¹⁷⁰ Ma'n b. Zā'idah al-Shaybānī, one of the most distinguished military commanders in the time of Caliph al-Manṣūr, was amongst those 'Abbāsid commanders who controlled vast numbers of *mawālī*, whom he used in most of his military campaigns. The last occasion on which he used them was before his death in 151/768, against the Khārijites in Khurāsān.¹⁷¹ After his death, the affiliation and loyalty of these *mawālī* were transferred to his

¹⁶⁷Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 4, p. 361.

¹⁶⁸Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 225.

¹⁶⁹Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 462; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 93.

¹⁷⁰Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 232; Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 262.

¹⁷¹Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, pp. 384-5.

nephew, Yazīd b. Mazyad.¹⁷² 'Abbāsīd governors are also reported to have controlled a large numbers of *mawālī*. The governor of Qinnasrīn in the time of Caliph al-Manṣūr, Ṣāliḥ b. 'Alī b. 'Abdallāh al-'Abbās, had so many *mawālī* under his control that it caused Caliph al-Manṣūr to fear such strength.¹⁷³ Muḥammad b. Sulaymān b. 'Alī b. al-'Abbās, the governor of Kūfah between the years 147/764 and 155/772 is, in similar fashion, reported to have had 50,000 *mawālī*.¹⁷⁴

The absolute loyalty of the *mawālī* to their patrons in the battlefield was unquestioned as they would stand by their manumitters in the most critical moments and share their sorrows. In a losing battle against al-Ma'mūn's forces in 196/812, Muḥammad b. Yazīd al-Muhallabī, al-Amīn's governor of the province of Ahwāz, is said to have offered his *mawālī* the chance to escape from the battlefield and leave him alone to fight to the bitter end. Nevertheless, his *mawālī* firmly rejected the idea of abandoning him in the battlefield, asserting their infinite gratitude to him for manumitting them from slavery, elevating them from humble position, and raising them from poverty to riches. Consequently, without regret, they stood firm, fought, and died by his side in battle.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷²*Ibid.*

¹⁷³*Ibid.*, p. 383.

¹⁷⁴Ibn al-Zubayr, *al-Dhakhā'ir wa al-Tuḥaf*, p. 222. There is no doubt that such numbers are exaggerated. Nevertheless, they do give a general indication of the large numbers of *mawālī* under the control of the 'Abbāsīd governors.

¹⁷⁵Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 433-4; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 387.

1.5 The Turks (*Atrāk*)

One of the difficulties presented by the Islamic sources that chronicle the first two centuries of Islam is the precise connotation of the term *Atrāk*, or Turks. Muslim historians such as al-Ṭabarī, al-Balādhurī, al-Ya'qūbī, and al-Khaṭīb frequently mean different things when using the term, reflecting usage during the time in which they lived, proximity to Central Asia, and their demographic, historical, and geographical knowledge of that region.¹⁷⁶ Thus, the term may oftentimes easily expand in meaning to include other eastern ethnic names such as Farāghinah, Ushrasaniyah, Khazar, Bukhariyah, Ishtūkhanjiyah, and sometimes even with the Khurāsāniyah.¹⁷⁷ Hence, for those who served in the early 'Abbāsids army, it seems that the term was used comprehensively to denote all the Central Asian troops, whose common characteristic was that the vast majority of them were slaves bought or brought from slave trade centers in the eastern provinces as well as from Baghdad itself.¹⁷⁸

Although the use of Turks in the Muslim armies was a feature of 'Abbāsīd times and of the reign of Caliph al-Mu'taṣim in particular, their presence within the ranks of Muslim armies can be traced back to as early as the first decades of the Umayyad Caliphate. The first reference to the use of Turks relates to 55/675, when 'Ubaydallāh b. Ziyād brought with him to Baṣrah 2,000 men from the people of

¹⁷⁶Pipes, "Turks", p. 85; Ismail, "Mu'taṣim and the Turks", pp. 14-5; Fukuzo, *'Abbāsīd Autocracy*, pp. 149-50.

¹⁷⁷Fukuzo, *'Abbāsīd Autocracy*, p. 148; Pipes, "Turks", p. 85.

¹⁷⁸Fukuzo, *'Abbāsīd Autocracy*, pp. 148-50; Pipes, *Slave Soldiers*, pp. 146-7, 205-10; *idem*, "Turks", pp. 85-90.

Bukhārā whom he had taken captive a year earlier after his successful raid against the city of Bukhārā and its Turkish allies.¹⁷⁹ After being set free, these captives settled in Baṣrah, where they formed a first-class auxiliary force under the governor of Baṣrah and were renowned for their great skill in the use of the bow.¹⁸⁰ Turks also found their way into the Umayyad forces serving in Syria. In 97/716, Caliph 'Abd al-Malik is reported to have sent one of his Turkish regiments to search for and detain al-Hārith b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Dimashqī, who proclaimed himself a prophet in Jerusalem.¹⁸¹ Turks are also mentioned to have been among Qutaybah b. Muslim's army in 96/715, when they were praised for their skills in archery.¹⁸² In 125/743, when Naṣr b. Sayār, the governor of Khurāsān, wanted to assemble an army to raid Transoxania, he instructed his deputies in the region to attract and recruit the Turks.¹⁸³

Under the 'Abbāsids, the first reference to the Turks relates to the time of the second 'Abbāsid Caliph, al-Manṣūr.¹⁸⁴ Nevertheless, their role seems to have been confined mainly to the Caliph's personal service and to some of the state administrative affairs

¹⁷⁹Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 5, p. 298.

¹⁸⁰Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 463; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 5, p. 298; vol. 7, p. 454; Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *al-'Iqd*, vol. 1, p. 195; Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyūn al-Akḥbār*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 132.

¹⁸¹Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, pp. 35-6.

¹⁸²Pipes, "Turks", p. 86.

¹⁸³Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 226; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 4, p. 471.

¹⁸⁴Tha'ālibī, *Laṭā'if*, p. 20.

such as collecting taxes.¹⁸⁵ The number of Turks at the disposal of the 'Abbāsīds seems to have augmented quickly, to the point that they found their way into the army in the time of Caliph al-Mahdī. In 160/777, the Turkish troops serving in the 'Abbāsīd army are credited with crushing the Khārijite rebel forces led by 'Abd al-Salām al-Yashkarī.¹⁸⁶ Likewise, under Caliph al-Rashīd, the presence of Turks serving in the army is also recorded. In a reception ceremony organized for ambassadors arriving from India, al-Rashīd is reported to have ordered the Turks to form two rows and armed them so heavily that only the pupils of their eyes were revealed, before he let the ambassadors enter.¹⁸⁷ During the civil war, Turkish elements were among the manpower who fought in each camp.¹⁸⁸ It should be noted, however, that until this stage, the number of Turks serving in the 'Abbāsīd army was still relatively small and their recruitment was merely incidental more than a designed policy by the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs.

However, after the end of the civil war and the accession of al-Ma'mūn, the number of Turks serving in the army increased dramatically. This could be attributed to the crisis of manpower that al-Ma'mūn experienced in the face of internal rebellions such as those in Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Khurāsān, and Adharbayjān, or the Byzantines'

¹⁸⁵ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 617-20; vol. 8, pp. 63, 103; Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, p. 309; Jahshiyārī, *Wuzarā'*, p. 134.

¹⁸⁶ Ibn Khayyāt, *Tārīkh*, p. 361.

¹⁸⁷ Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *al-'Iqd*, vol. 2, p. 203.

¹⁸⁸ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 452, 461.

threat on the northern frontiers.¹⁸⁹ In order to compensate for this shortfall in manpower, al-Ma'mūn sought to recruit a considerable number of Central Asian slaves, most of whom were brought from the slave trade centres in Iraq or those scattered in towns of the eastern provinces like Samarqand, or as part of the annual tribute sent by the 'Abbāsīds' governors in Khurāsān to Baghdad.¹⁹⁰

Although al-Ma'mūn was the first Caliph to recruit Turks in considerable numbers, this practice became much more obvious with his brother and successor, al-Mu'taṣim. This should be set against the fact that the Turks did not achieve such a predominant military role in the time of al-Ma'mūn as they would later achieve under al-Mu'taṣim. Upon his accession, al-Mu'taṣim followed the example of his brother, al-Ma'mūn, by acquiring Turkish slaves, a practice he had begun during the reign of his brother.¹⁹¹ Nevertheless, the novel practice introduced by al-Mu'taṣim upon his accession, was that he made a concentrated effort to recruit Turks, to the point that they came to constitute the bulk of the 'Abbāsīd central army in his time.¹⁹² Sources estimate their number at 20,000,¹⁹³ 50,000,¹⁹⁴ or 70,000.¹⁹⁵ Another

¹⁸⁹Ismail, "Mu'taṣim", p. 14; Pipes, *Slave Soldiers*, pp. 168-9; *idem*, "Turks", p. 88; El-Hibri, *Caliph al-Ma'mūn*, pp. 268-84.

¹⁹⁰Jahshiyārī, *Wuzarā'*, pp. 283, 286; Ibn Ṭayfūr, *Baghdād*, p. 95; Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Masālik*, p. 39; Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan*, p. 340; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 5, p. 71; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, vol. 2, p. 233; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, vol. 1, p. 173.

¹⁹¹While al-Ya'qūbī (*Buldān*, p. 27) estimates the number of Turkish slaves at the disposal of al-Mu'taṣim in the time of al-Ma'mūn at 3,000, al-Kindī (*Wulāt*, p. 188-9) gives the number as 4,000.

¹⁹²Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh*, vol. 3, pp. 344-6; Ibn al-'Imrānī, *al-Anbā'*, p. 106.

¹⁹³Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 325.

¹⁹⁴Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh*, vol. 3, p. 346.

novelty regarding the recruitment of Turkish slaves was that although they had been used in the Muslim armies since the time of the Umayyads and increasingly in the time of al-Ma'mūn, there is no indication that they were enlisted in the *Dīwān* (military register). In fact, historical reports indicate that al-Mu'taṣim was the first Caliph to enter the Turks in the military register.¹⁹⁶ Al-Mu'taṣim's policy in employing Turks did not stop at recruiting them on a large scale and registering their names in the *Dīwān*, but extended to his giving them preference over other ethnic and regional groups in his army.¹⁹⁷ This preferential treatment started by distinguishing them through their uniform from the rest of his soldiers. He attired them in brocade, golden girdles, and gilded armaments.¹⁹⁸ Caliph al-Mu'taṣim went a step further in his policy of distinguishing his Turks from other military groups by deciding, having built his new capital in Sāmarrā', to separate his Turkish troops from the rest of the population, including other military racial groups.¹⁹⁹ To discourage any interaction between his Turkish troops and other sectors of the population, the Turkish quarters were provided with their own shops, bath-houses, markets, and mosques.²⁰⁰ Moreover, in order to preserve their ethnic purity, al-

¹⁹⁵Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 3, p. 174; Qazwīnī, *Āthār al-Bilād*, pp. 318, 385; Niẓām al-Mulk, *Siyāsatnāmah*, p. 85.

¹⁹⁶Suyūṭī, *Tārīkh al-Khulafā'*, pp. 24, 519; Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, vol. 1, p. 16.

¹⁹⁷Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 4, p. 53; *idem*, *Tanbīh*, p. 354.

¹⁹⁸Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 4, p. 53; *idem*, *Tanbīh*, p. 354; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, vol. 2, p. 233.

¹⁹⁹Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 4, p. 55; Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 29.

²⁰⁰Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 26.

Mu'taṣim forbade his Turkish soldiers to marry outside their own ethnic stock.²⁰¹ For that purpose, he bought Turkish slave girls and had them marry his Turkish troops, so that when their children grew up, they would in turn intermarry exclusively amongst themselves. Finally, to make it impossible for his Turkish troops to divorce or abandon the wives that had been assigned to them, the Caliph entered the name of the slave girls in a register and allotted them fixed allowances (*arzāq qā'imah*).²⁰²

1.6 Minor Military Elements

From the outset of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate, service in the Muslim armies ceased to be an Arab privilege. As we have seen, alongside the Arabs, a large number of *mawālī* from different ethnic backgrounds served in the 'Abbāsid military institution. The account of the composition of the 'Abbāsid army mentioned in the previous parts of this chapter does not in fact include all the elements of the early 'Abbāsid army. Rather, we have discussed only the major military groups, their development, and the transfer of predominance from the Arabs to the Iranians, before it finally rested with the Turks. In addition to these three elements that constituted the backbone of the 'Abbāsids' army during the first century of their rule, there were other elements that played a negligible role in the 'Abbāsid military establishment. Among these secondary fighting forces mentioned as parts of the 'Abbāsid army were 'black Africans', generally referred to in Islamic sources either as Africans (*Zunūj*, sing.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

Zinj), Abyssinians (*Aḥbāsh*, sing. *Ḥabashī*), or blacks (*sūdān*, sing. *aswad*).²⁰³ The use of black African soldiers in the Muslim armies was not an 'Abbāsid innovation, as they had been used as early as the first battle fought in Islam.²⁰⁴ Under the 'Abbāsids, the first reference to the use of black Africans relates to 133/751, as sources report that the 'Abbāsid army in Mawṣil included among its ranks 4,000 Africans (*Zunūj*). How and when these black soldiers entered the army remains obscure, but, sources note that they were soon put to death after the massacre that they committed by the order of Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad, governor of Mawṣil, against the city's inhabitants.²⁰⁵ During the civil war, the Abyssinians (*Aḥbāsh*) and the blacks (*sūdān*) are reported to have fought ferociously on the side of al-Amīn.²⁰⁶

In addition to the black Africans, there were also other ethnic groups, many of whom are mentioned to have served previously in the Umayyad war machine, before transferring to the 'Abbāsids. Among these were the Sayābijah,²⁰⁷ Asāwīrah,²⁰⁸

²⁰² *Ibid.*

²⁰³ Pipes, "Black", pp. 87-8.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 90; *idem*, *Slave Soldiers*, p. 109.

²⁰⁵ Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 149.

²⁰⁶ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 448.

²⁰⁷ A non-Arab group originally from Java and Sumatra, who had migrated in pre-Islamic times to Iraq, where they had been used as guards and frontier auxiliaries by the Sassanian. After the Arab conquest of Iraq, the Sayābijah became Muslims and attached themselves as *mawālī* to the Arab tribe of Tamīm. *ET*², s.v. "Sayābijah".

²⁰⁸ They were Persian cavalrymen who joined the Muslims after the conquest of Iraq and settled in Baṣrah, where they attached themselves as *mawālī* to the tribe of Tamīm. See *ET*², s.v. "Asāwīrah"; *Elr*, s.v. "Asāwera."

Ṣaqālibah²⁰⁹, Indians, Sindis, Nubians, Berbers,²¹⁰ and Khazars, the last being mentioned as one of the components of al-Mu'taṣim's army.²¹¹ Moreover, by the end of the first century of 'Abbāsid rule, the 'Abbāsid central army comprised also a group of Maghāribah. Although sources indicate the Arab origin of the Maghāribah as being from among the factions of Qays and Yemen, inhabiting the east and west of the Nile delta (*ḥawf*),²¹² the group most likely also included some Copts who converted to Islam and some Berbers from North Africa.

It should be noted, however, that many of these minor elements may have composed part of the mass of people known as the 'Caliphs' *mawālī*', who were former slaves and were used as guards and reserves in warfare. Nevertheless, the term 'Caliphs' *mawālī*' was much more broad, for it comprised also groups of free Iranians and others who were politically bound to the 'Abbāsid Caliphate's household.²¹³

²⁰⁹The term seems to denote fair-skinned and fair-haired people of various races within northern Europe and West Asia. See *EL*², s.v. "Ṣakāliba."

²¹⁰Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 117, 448-500.

²¹¹Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 29.

²¹²Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 4, p. 53; *idem*, *Tanbīh*, p. 356.

²¹³Having lost its social significance under the 'Abbāsids, the institution of the *walā*' acquired a new political importance. With no legal basis, the political *walā*' or the *walā*' of agency most often existed between the 'Abbāsid Caliphs and some of their men with political significance. Irrespective of their social origins, the Caliph would, therefore, bestow upon the *mawla*-agent the title *mawlā amīr al-mu'minin* as an honorific gesture. For more on the *walā*' of agency, see Pipes, "Mawlas", pp. 154-6; Crone, P., *The Mawālī In The Umayyad Period*, Ph.D. thesis, Univ. of London, 1973, pp. 140-1; *idem*, *Slaves on horses. The evolution of the Islamic Polity*. Cambridge, 1980.

Summary

In this chapter we have examined the element that composed the early 'Abbāsid armies, including the Khurāsānīs, the *abnā'*, the Arabs, the *mawālī*, the Turks, and other minor military elements.

During the formative years of their Caliphate, the 'Abbāsid heavily relied on a professional fighting force based almost exclusively on the revolutionary armies from Khurāsān. Contrary to the assumption of a mass indigenous Iranians uprising against the Arab domination, the backbone of the revolutionary forces was the Arab tribesmen transplanted into the region who had different reasons to feel dissatisfied with the Umayyads and their representatives in the Khurāsān. In addition to the Arabs, the revolutionary armies also included a considerable number of local *mawālī*, and even slaves, who found in the 'Abbāsid revolution the vehicle for their emancipation.

After the accession of the 'Abbāsids to power, the Khurāsānī forces passed through a formative stage during which they were transformed from a revolutionary militia into a professional army. The earliest discussion and analysis of the Khurāsānīs characteristics and the problems that they faced during the early years of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate is to be found in a pertinent monograph by Ibn al-Muqaffa' entitled *Risālah fī al-Ṣaḥābah*. Among other things to which Ibn al-Muqaffa's treaties testifies are the dangers that confronted the Caliph by an excess of zeal

among the Khurāsānīs, their tendency to find alternative means of income if their salaries were not paid regularly, and their lack of instruction in Islamic teaching.

For much of the first century of 'Abbāsīd rule, the Khurāsānī forces continued to be the predominant and most distinguished unit of the 'Abbāsīd central army in Baghdad. During that period, however, the ethnic identity of the Khurāsānī forces was dramatically changed. While the Khurāsānī forces that brought the 'Abbāsīds to power consisted mostly of Arabs, from the time of al-Ma'mūn they consisted predominantly of non-Arab element.

Among the components of the early 'Abbāsīd army in Baghdad were the descendants of the old Khurāsānī veterans, who were known by the name *al-abnā'* ('sons'). Many of these descendants not only inherited from their ancestors Baghdad as a homeland, but also military service as a career. It is clear however, that when sources speak of the *abnā'* in the time of the civil war between al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn, they distinguish between two groups, each of which had its military commanders and its political agenda. This division within the *abnā'* community seems to have been based on two key factors: first, the geographical location of their settlement in Baghdad; and second, the variations in position and privileges enjoyed by each within the 'Abbāsīd court and army. The *abnā'*, as a military group, continued to form a very important element of the composition of the central army in Baghdad until the time of al-Mu'taṣim, when they started to become marginalized on

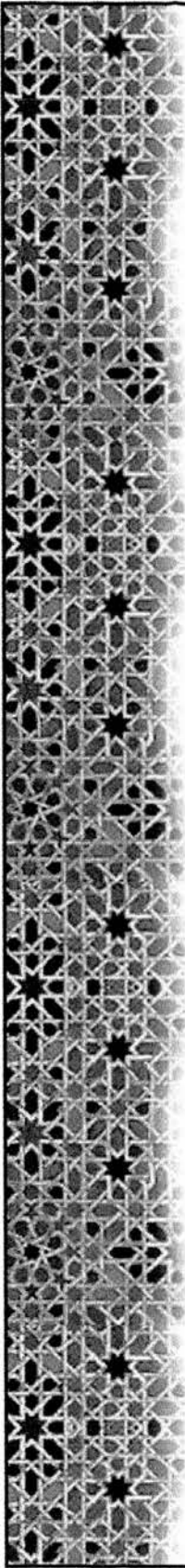
account of the growing number of the Turks and the shift of the capital from Baghdad to Sāmarrā'.

During the early stage of their rule the 'Abbāsids accommodated within their central armies many Arab tribesmen, mostly Iraqi, who had joined the revolutionary forces in their struggle against the Umayyad forces in Iraq. Nevertheless, their role seems to have ended in the time of Caliph al-Manṣūr, when they were dispatched to Ifrīqiya not only on army service but also as permanent settlers. Thereafter, except for a short period during the civil war, the 'Abbāsids put in effect an end to any further admission of Arab tribesmen from Iraq, Jazīrah, and Syria into their central armies. The same policy was also applied with regard to the Arab provincial forces. The halt of the conquest campaigns and the increase reliance on the non-Arab elements in their armies were all factors that led the 'Abbāsids from the time of Caliph al-Manṣūr to demilitarize the Arab provinces, particularly Iraq, Syria, and Jazīrah. This policy was carried out in two ways: first, by draining those areas of as much as possible of their military manpower by transferring many of their fighting forces to the frontier zones where they could serve and settle permanently; and, second, by abolishing the old system of *'aṭā'* and voluntary service and replacing it with the new system of *artizāq* and professionalism. In other word, henceforth, only those who participated practically in the military service would be eligible to receive stipends. The final blow to the Arabs in the 'Abbāsīd military establishment came in the time of Caliph al-Ma'taṣim, who took the ultimate step of eliminating whatever Arabs still remained in the old *Dīwān*.

Among the early components of the early 'Abbāsīd army were the *mawālī*, who predominantly were manumitted slaves rather than non-Arab free persons. The *mawālī* who served in the early 'Abbāsīd armies were of two groups: first, those who were attached to the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs themselves; and second, those who were attached to individual state dignitaries, including members of the 'Abbāsīd family and army commanders.

The last important contingents of the early 'Abbāsīd army were the Turks (*Atrāk*). During the first century of the 'Abbāsīd rule, the term *Atrāk* was used comprehensively to denote all the Central Asian troops, whose common characteristic was that the vast majority of them came from slave centres in the eastern provinces as well as from Baghdad itself. Although the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs employed Turks in their armies as early as the time of Caliph al-Mahdī, the Turks did not achieve any predominant military role until the region of al-Mu'taṣim, by which time they constituted the bulk of the 'Abbāsīd central army.

In addition to the Khurāsānīs, *abna'*, Arabs, *mawālī*, and Turks, the 'Abbāsīds also employed in their armies a number of minor elements including black Africans, the Sayābijah, Ṣaqālibah, Nubians, Indians, and other groups of people from the margins of the Islamic Empire.



Chapter 2

*‘Abbāsīd Forces within
the Framework of
the Dīwān Al-Jund*

Introduction

One of the significant reforms that took place in the early 'Abbāsīd Caliphate and had deep impact on the way the Muslim armies were organized and recruited was the method used in enlisting the soldiers into the *Dīwān* and the change in the principle of '*aṭā*' and *arzāq*. In addition to tracing these changes in the early 'Abbāsīd era, this chapter will attempt also to shed light on many other matters related to the 'Abbāsīds' *Dīwān*, including the method of distributing the soldiers' pay, developments in the traditional systems of '*aṭā*' and *arzāq*, the conditions of enlistment in the *Dīwān*, the rates of pay of the 'Abbāsīd troops, the reaction of soldiers to their pay falling into arrears, and the size of the 'Abbāsīd army.

2.1 The *Dīwān Al-Jund* and the Systems of '*Aṭā*' and *Arzāq* from Their Inception to the End of the Umayyad Caliphate

During the early years of the establishment of *jihād* (2/624), the booty taken from the Quraysh and their allies, either in combat or in successful raids against their caravans, constituted the main source of revenue for the Muslim community in Madīnah. However, by the end of the Prophet's life, in around 9/631, another source of revenue emerged. This was represented by the *jizyah* (tribute or poll tax) imposed on the *Ahl al-Kitāb* (the "People of the Book"), i.e. Christians, Jews, and Magians, living within the confines of Arabia in areas such as Tabūk, Madīnah, Makkah, Najrān, Bahrain, and Yemen. The amount of the *jizyah* depended very much on the

area, the number of people, and the financial situation of each person.¹ Although Islamic sources indicate that there was some sort of record containing the names of those Muslims who took part on each of the military expeditions in the time of the Prophet, there are no such indications that records were kept of the revenue (*fay'*)² flowing into Madīnah. Instead, it was simply gathered in the Mosque and distributed equally amongst all Muslims in Madīnah within a period of no more than three days.³ One of the problems that arose after the death of the Prophet concerning the revenue was the principle of equality in dividing it. This principle seemed to generate dissatisfaction amongst the early Muslims, mainly the *Anṣār* and *Muhājirūn*. Under the justification of their being the first to take up the burden and make sacrifices for the sake of Islam and the Prophet, they demanded of the first Caliph, Abū Bakr, that he give them financial preference over those who embraced Islam at a later stage, especially after the fall of Makkah (9/631), and whose motives for entering the new

¹The *jizyah* was paid either in money, as for example, by the people of Adhruh, or in kind, as, for example, by the people of Maqna, who agreed to pay a quarter of their crops. Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 71-104; Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, vol. 3, pp. 1027-32; Ibn Sallām, *Amwāl*, pp. 45-6.

²A debate seems to exist among Muslim jurists over the precise definition of *fay'*. Nevertheless, the majority view is that *fay'* means the sources of revenue taken from the conquered areas, including *kharāj*, *jizyah*, and taxes on trade. But the main emphasis was on *kharāj* as it was the largest source. According to Muslim jurists, all *fay'* goes to the State Treasury, to be used for the benefit of the state. Abu Yūsuf, *Kharāj*, p. 24; Qudāmāh, *al-Kharāj*, pp. 204-6. For more details on the Islamic taxation system and the state's financial affairs in general, see Simonsen & Forlag, *Studies in the Genesis and Early Development of the Caliphal Taxation System*; B. Johansen, *The Islamic Law and Land Tax and Rent*; Shemesh, *Taxation in Islam*; Løkkegard, F., *Islamic Taxation in the Islamic Period*; al-Rayyis, *al-Kharāj wa al-Nuẓum al-Māliyah*; Levy, *Social structure*, pp. 308-14; Samadi, "Some Aspects", pp. 133-7.

³Jahshiyārī, *Wizarā*, pp. 12-3; Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 4, p.119.

faith were suspect.⁴ Nevertheless, Abū Bakr refused any such distinction, stating that all Muslims were the same here and that Allāh would reward everyone according to what he really deserved in the hereafter. Thus, he continued to divide the revenue equally amongst all Muslims, whether young or old, slave or free, male or female.⁵ Abū Bakr also did not make any effort to specify the sum given to Muslims. Rather, the rate continued to be dependent very much on the amount of revenue coming to the capital, Madīnah.⁶ However, the principle of equality in sharing the revenue soon changed after the death of Abū Bakr, mainly as a result of the financial and administrative measures introduced by the second Caliph, 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (12-634/22-644). These measures were the establishment of the *Dīwān al-Jund* (the army register) and the system of the '*aṭa*' (stipend).⁷ According to the different Islamic sources that speak about the formation of the *Dīwān* and its characteristics, the immense wealth flowing into Madīnah as a result of the Islamic conquest was the main reason behind the establishment of the *Dīwān*. It became difficult for the Caliph personally to administer and distribute the huge fortune

⁴According to Islamic sources, 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb was amongst those who questioned the principle of equality in distributing revenue. It is reported that he said to Abū Bakr, "How would you equate between him who migrated twice and prayed facing the two *qiblahs* and him who embraced Islam in the year of *fath* (the fall of Makkah) for fear of being killed?" Ibn Sallām, *Amwāl*, p. 277; Abū Yūsuf, *Kharāj*, p. 45; Māwardī, *Aḥkām*, p. 201; Qalqashandī, *Subḥ al-A'shā*, vol. 13, p. 116.

⁵Abū Yūsuf, *Kharāj*, p. 45; Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 3, p. 193; Ibn Sallām, *Amwāl*, p. 276.

⁶It is reported that in the first year of his rule Abū Bakr gave 10 *dirhams* to every Muslim, whether man or woman, free or slave. In the following year he granted them 20 *dirhams* each. Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 3, p. 193; Abū Yūsuf, *Kharāj*, p. 45; Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, vol. 1, p. 169.

⁷A debate exists in the sources about the year in which 'Umar decided to establish the *Dīwān*, but the majority of sources state that this was in the year 20/640. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 3, pp. 613, 615; vol. 4, pp. 42-3; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 153; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 436; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, pp. 2-5; Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 3, p. 296.

amongst the warriors, whose numbers not only became enormous but were also scattered over all the various war fronts in Iraq and Syria.⁸ Thus, the aim in establishing the *Dīwān* was primarily to administer the public revenue and to organize the warriors and distribute their '*aṭā*' on a regular basis, so that they would not have to labour for their bread and their continual participation in the conquest movement would be assured. The method followed by Caliph 'Umar in listing people in the *Dīwān* was according to their *nasab* or tribal genealogy.⁹ On this basis each tribe, whether it remained in Arabia or emigrated to the garrison towns in the conquered areas, was specified with its own *Dīwān*, in which all its members along with their *mawālī* were enlisted.¹⁰

The financial measures introduced by Caliph 'Umar were characterized by his refusal to treat the conquered lands, such in Iraq and Syria, as booty, which, if they had been so regarded, would have had to be divided amongst the warriors who seized them. Instead, he considered these lands as public domains whose original owners would continue to cultivate them and pay in return a rent, known as *kharāj*.¹¹ Through this policy the *fay*' or tribute taken from these lands, in addition to the *jizyah*, constituted a permanent and unceasing fund for the '*atā*' and *arzāq* (food subsidies) of all

⁸Jahshiyārī, *Wizarat*, p. 17; Māwardī, *Aḥkām*, p.199; Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, vol. 1, p. 169.

⁹For this purpose, the Caliph commanded 'Aqīl b. Abī Ṭālib, Makhramah b. Nawfal, and Jubayr b. Muṭ'im, who all belonged to Quraysh and were experts in matters of genealogy or *nasab*, to list the men according to their tribal origin. Ibn Sallām, *Amwāl*, pp. 235-6; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 550.

¹⁰Ibn Sallām, *Amwāl*, p. 247; Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 5, p. 13. Those who did not have a tribe or were not *mawālī* of a tribe had to enlist themselves within the register of one of the Arab tribes. People of this sort were distinguished from the *mawālī* by being designated *a'dād* (lit. "numbers"). Maqdisī, *al-Bad'*, vol. 5, p. 168.

Muslims warriors, their families, and those who would come after them.¹² Nevertheless, the allotment of the 'atā' no longer stood on a basis of equality but according to a new system, which took account of kinship with the Prophet, priority of conversion, service to Islam, and necessity to Islam.¹³ According to these criteria, the Prophet's widows (*Ummahāt al-Mu'minīn*) received 10,000 *dirhams* each. The prophet's uncle, al-'Abbās, received 12,000 *dirhams*, which was the largest 'atā' ever awarded to any man. To categorize the grades and thus the 'atā' of the rest of Muslims according to their early conversion and service to Islam, certain famous battles were chosen as marks between one period and another. Beginning with the *Muhājirūn* and the *Anṣār* who had fought with the Prophet in the battle of Badr, these were allotted a stipend of 5,000 *dirhams* each. Those who embraced Islam after the battle of Badr and were present at the battle of Uḥud, as well as the emigrants to Ethiopia, received 4,000 *dirhams* each. Those who emigrated to Madīnah before the fall of Makkah received 3,000 *dirhams* each. Those who were present at the battle of

¹¹ Abū Yūsuf, *Kharāj*, p. 124; Ibn Sallām, *Amwāl*, pp. 267-8.

¹² Ibn Sallām, *Amwāl*, pp. 64-5; Abū Yūsuf, *Kharāj*, p. 124; Māwardī, *Aḥkām*, p. 126; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 179.

¹³ Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 4, p. 211; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 548-51, Ibn Sallām, *Amwāl*, pp. 236-8.

Qādisiyyah and Yarmūk in Syria (*ahl al-ayyām*) received 2,000 *dirhams* and the rest of the Muslims received between 500 and 300 *dirhams* each.¹⁴

Although all sources agree that Caliph 'Umar continued to the end of his life to adhere to the policy of precedence in allotting the '*aṭā*', there are some indications that in the last year of his life he started to consider a return to the old policy of equality.¹⁵ This change of view seems to have been due to the discontent that appeared amongst the recipients of the lower '*aṭā*', whose numbers seem to have multiplied constantly as a consequence of the new converts from among the inhabitants of the conquered territories. This resentment became openly manifest in the time of the third Caliph, 'Uthmān, especially with the slowing in the rate of

¹⁴Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 550-6; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 3, p. 614; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 153; Maqdisī, *Bad'*, vol. 5, p. 168. According to these criteria, not all the Arabs were eligible for the '*aṭā*'. Initially, the '*aṭā*' was allotted only to the people of Madīnah, the *Anṣār* and *Muhājirūn*, and the tribes who embraced Islam and joined the conquered armies. Among those who were denied this privilege were the *a'rāb* or bedouin, who remained in their homeland of Arabia and did not take part in the conquest operations. Also, initially, the people of Makkah were not allotted '*aṭā*' in the time of 'Umar because he used not to send them on military campaigns. Ibn Sallām, *Amwāl*, pp. 240-4; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 561. Also, according to these criteria, the *mawālī* enjoyed equal status with the Arabs. They were included in the *Dīwān* and allotted '*aṭā*' according to the rate paid to the Arab tribes they belonged to or were registered with. In this context, it is reported that 'Umar wrote to the commanders of the armies as follows: "Those of the *ḥamrā*' whom you manumitted and who adopted Islam should be joined to their clients on terms of equality in regard to their privileges as well as duties. However, if they want to form a separate tribe, they are entitled to do so, but then you should also make them equal to them [their Arab clients] in regard to their '*aṭā*'."

"كتب عمر إلى أمراء الأجناد يقول ومن أعتقتم من الحمراء فاسلموا فألحقوهم بمواليهم لهم ما لهم وعليهم ما عليهم وإن أحبوا أن يكونوا قبيلة وحدهم فأجعلهم" (أسوقهم في العطاء). Ibn Sallām, *Amwāl*, p. 247; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 563. As for the *mamlūks* or slaves, although they had been allotted '*aṭā*' in the time of Abū Bakr if they were fighters, they were denied this right in the time of 'Umar, who only gave '*aṭā*' to those slaves who took part in the battle of Badr. Ibn Sallām, *Amwāl*, pp. 240-4; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 561.

conquests and, consequently, the reduction of revenue coming from the booty, which constituted a prime source of income.¹⁶ Although 'Uthmān continued to follow the policy of precedence in allotting the '*aṭā*', he endeavoured at the same time to cope with the problem by minimizing the distinctions between the '*aṭā*' classes. Thus, on the one hand he raised the '*aṭā*' of those who received less and, on the other, reduced some of the high stipends.¹⁷ Yet, once again, this action provoked the wrath of the tribal chiefs and the recipients of the high stipends.¹⁸

After the death of 'Uthmān, the new Caliph, 'Alī, tried to resolve this dilemma by returning to the concept of equality amongst all Muslims regardless of their origin, social status, or date of conversion.¹⁹ Although 'Uthmān's reform satisfied the late converts, whether they were Arabs or *mawālī*, it angered the early Muslims as well as the tribal chiefs, many of whom expressed their resentment not only by abstaining

¹⁵It is reported that after seeing the money grow to immense proportions, Caliph 'Umar promised that if he lived until the time of the distribution of the next '*aṭā*' (i.e., until the beginning of 24/644), he would restore the policy of equality and give every soldier 4,000 *dirhams*, made up of 1,000 *dirhams* for his family, 1,000 *dirhams* for his travelling expenses, 1,000 *dirhams* for his weapons, and 1,000 *dirhams* for his riding beasts. Ibn Sallām, *Amwāl*, p. 277; Abū Yūsuf, *Kharāj*, p. 50; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 154; Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 3, p. 297; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 3, p. 615; Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-A'shā*, vol. 13, p. 116.

¹⁶Dūrī, *Muqaddimah*, pp. 55-6.

¹⁷It is reported, for example, that Sa'id b. al-'Āṣ, the governor of Kūfah in the time of 'Uthmān, reduced the stipends of the elite women (*ashraf al-nisā'*) of Kūfah by 100 *dirhams* and sought also to reduce the stipends of those who had witnessed the battle of Qādisiyyah by 500 *dirhams*. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 4, p. 331.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹Ya'qūbī (*Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 183) says, " 'Alī allotted to the people equally and did not prefer one over another. He gave to the *mawālī* as he gave to the full-blooded Arab (*ṣalībī*)."

from taking part in the expeditions but also by siding with his political opponent, Mu'āwiyah.²⁰

Under the Umayyads, the registering in the *Dīwān* continued to be carried out according to the rules laid down by Caliph 'Umar, so that enrolment continued to be according to the Arab *nasab*.²¹ As for the system of the '*aṭā*', it no longer stood on a basis of equality, nor did it regard seniority or service to Islam. Instead, it developed toward subordination to the Caliph's wish and personal motives. Thus, if heroism on the battlefield was one of these motives, then loyalty to the Umayyad house and seniority in its service was the most important motive and the criterion that not only determined the rate of the '*aṭā*' but also the eligibility to receive this right. In other words, since the commencement of their rule, the Umayyad Caliphs utilized the '*aṭā*' both as a reward to attract supporters and enhance their loyalty and as a punishment for any who would oppose them.²² Within this framework, it was no wonder that under the Umayyads the Syrian forces, known for their profound loyalty to the Umayyads, were allotted a higher '*aṭā*' than the rest of the Arab armies in other provinces.²³ It is mentioned, for example, that Mu'āwiyah, in 32/652, raised the

²⁰Ibn A'tham, *Futūḥ*, vol. 4, p. 194.

²¹*EI*², s.v. "Dīwān"; Sharon, "Reform", p. 61.

²²It is noted, for example, that as a way to suppress the supporters of al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī in Kūfah in 60/680, 'Ubaydallāh b. Ziyād, the governor of Kūfah, resorted to the threat of stopping the '*aṭā*' of any group ('*arāḍiyyah*') that contained within its ranks an adversary and failed to report him to the authority. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 5, p. 359. For further information on how the Umayyads exploited the '*aṭā*' as a means of reward and punishment, see Tritton, "Notes", pp. 170-2.

²³Blay, "From Damascus", p. 30.

'*aṭā*' of the Syrians to 200 and reduced that of the Iraqi troops to only 30 *dirhams*.²⁴

The continual discriminatory policy against the Iraqis in allotting the '*aṭā*' is also confirmed by al-Ṭabarī while describing the events of 82/702. He points out that during the negotiations with the rebellious forces of Ibn al-Ash'ath al-Kindī, Caliph 'Abd al-Malik (65-685/75-705) offered the Iraqis an '*aṭā*' equal to that of the Syrians.²⁵ It is worth noting, however, that the discrimination in allotting the '*aṭā*' was not a matter limited to the Arab forces outside the Syrian province, as it touched even the Syrian armies themselves. This was because the Syrian Arab tribes, mainly Yemenites and Qaysites, did not have the same degree of enthusiasm for and loyalty to the different Umayyad Caliphs. Rather, the dimension of their loyalty was subject to increase and decrease according to the inclination of each Caliph toward one tribal bloc over another and so it followed that their '*aṭā*' was similarly affected by such inclinations.²⁶ As for the *mawālī*, although they constituted a considerable force within the Muslim army in the time of the Umayyads, except for some isolated and exceptional cases of *mawālī* being among the recipients of the '*aṭā*', the vast

²⁴Tritton, "Notes", p. 172; Wellhausen, *Arab Kingdom*, p. 131.

²⁵Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 6, p. 347. The preferential treatment of the Syrian soldiers over the Iraqis seems to have continued until the end of the Umayyad rule. This is confirmed by Dīnawarī (*Akhbār*, p. 360), who notes that Yazīd b. 'Umar b. Hubayrah, the last Umayyad governor in Iraq, said in a letter sent to Caliph Marwān, "The Syrian soldiers are better than the Iraqis, because the latter are not loyal to the Umayyad Caliphs and their hearts are full of grudge."

²⁶This is well illustrated by the Kalbite tribes of Yemen, who, at least until the time of 'Abd al-Malik, seem to have been given a higher '*aṭā*' than the rest of the Syrian tribes. Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, p. 95. This fact is also emphasized by al-Iṣfahānī (*Aghānī*, vol. 20, p. 223) and al-Dīnawarī (*Akhbār*, p. 368). While al-Iṣfahānī points out that the Yemenites were the only people to be allotted an '*aṭā*' in the time of Mu'āwiyah, al-Dīnawarī indicates that they were denied this privilege in the time of Marwān b. Muḥammad and that this was one of the reasons that led the Yemenites, who once had served within the Syrian army in Iraq, to desert their former allegiance and join the 'Abbāsids.

majority of them, especially in Iraq and Khurāsān, were denied this right.²⁷ The ultimate effect of the Umayyads' policy in allotting the '*aṭā*' was only to deepen the factionalism, division, enmities, and disputes between the various elements of the tribal forces on the one hand, and between the tribal forces along with the non-Arab elements in the army and the central government on the other hand.

One of the rules that had been laid down by Caliph 'Umar I and continued to be employed throughout Umayyad times was the succession of the right to '*aṭā*'. According to al-Balādhurī, the inheritance of the '*aṭā*' stood on the basis that when a man died, his '*aṭā*' could only be inherited by his heirs who were not already recipients of the '*aṭā*'.²⁸ It seems, however, that during Umayyad times, as a way of circumventing this condition, the near heirs of the dead who were recipients of the '*aṭā*', sought in connivance with the '*urafā*', who were responsible for the distribution of the '*aṭā*' among the soldiers, not to inform the authority of the names of their deceased relatives. Therefore, the '*aṭā*' of the dead would be taken as if the person were alive and then unlawfully be divided between the two connivers.²⁹ Despite the serious attempts made by the Umayyad authority to control this type of fraud, such as reviewing the pay-roll of the army and eliminating the names of the

²⁷Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 6, p. 559; Wellhausen, *Arab Kingdom*, p. 97.

²⁸Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 561.

²⁹Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh*, p. 154.

missing or dead people, in practice it failed to put an end to such abuses.³⁰ This situation was probably the reason why Caliph 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz (99-101/717-720), at the beginning of his rule, seriously considered abandoning the whole idea of inheriting the '*aṭā*'. According to reports, he refrained from doing so after he was advised by one of his associates, who said to him, "I fear lest future generations follow your footsteps by cutting off inheritance rather than following your example concerning general religious obligations."³¹ However, in order to encourage the people to come forward and report their dead, which would enable the authority in turn to update its records, Caliph 'Umar decided to entitle heirs to inherit the '*aṭā*' of their dead even if those heirs were already recipients of the '*aṭā*'.³²

One of the main obligations of those men who were enlisted on the *Dīwān* and subsequently received the '*aṭā*' was to join the military expeditions and wage *jihād* if their services were needed. However, there is clear evidence that during the reign of the Umayyads, as a consequence of their settlement in the conquered territories and their becoming city-dwellers, many of those men became reluctant to carry out their military duties. This led the Umayyad authority to use compulsion in recruiting the manpower needed for war, using the threat to cut off the '*aṭā*' and even at some point

³⁰According to Ibn 'Abd Rabbih (*al-'Iqd*, vol. 5, p. 8), Ziyād b. Abīhi, the governor of Iraq during the reign of Mu'āwiyah, was the first to review the registers ("أول من حصل الدواوين"). According to al-Zamakhsharī (*Asās al-Balāghah*, p. 126, s.v. *ḥaṣala*), the meaning of *tahṣīl al-dawāwīn* is to distinguish between the present and the absent and between the dead and the living.

³¹Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 561.

³²Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 5, p. 346.

the threat of the death penalty against those laggards.³³ But if the Umayyads' new policy succeeded in achieving its aim through capable and ruthless administrators such as Ziyād b. Abīhi and al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf, it failed under others who lacked the same power and forcefulness of character. As a means of escaping military service, the tribesmen and others in receipt of the '*aṭā*', such as members of the Umayyad house, resorted to hiring substitutes who would carry out their military duties on their behalf.³⁴ Others sought to escape military service by taking up certain professions that freed them from this obligation, such as employment in government offices (*dawāwīn*).³⁵

Associated with the establishment of the *Dīwān* in the time of Caliph 'Umar, the Muslim warriors, along with every member of their households, used also to receive, in addition to their annual '*aṭā*', food subsidies (*arzāq*). In order to set a standard measurement for the quantity of food that should be distributed to each person, Caliph 'Umar first ordered a *jarīb*³⁶ of wheat to be kneaded, baked, and then crumbled and soaked in oil. He then called thirty men to eat their lunch from this

³³Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, p. 135; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 6, p. 204; Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, vol. 2, p. 310.

³⁴Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 6, p. 434; vol. 7, pp. 40, 202; Ibn Qutaybah, *Imāmāh*, pt. 2, p. 3; Shaybānī, *Sharḥ Kitāb al-Siyar al-Kabīr*, vol. 1, p. 139; al-'Alī, *Tanzīmāt*, p. 140. Technically this was called *tajā'ul* (sing. *ju'l*). Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, vol. 11, pp. 110-1.

³⁵Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 202. Sharon ("Reform", p.124) underlines this fact by commenting, "The end result was that, although theoretically all the Arab warriors were at the disposal of the Head of the Islamic State, in practice there was no real standing army existing in such numbers that could even approach the list of the *dīwān*."

food. The men ate from it until they were sated. For dinner he did the same thing and indeed the food was sufficient for those thirty men. Seeing the result, 'Umar then decided to designate two *jarīb*s of food to be the allotted portion of each person on a monthly basis.³⁷ During Umayyad times the warriors continued to receive this subsidy and it seems that, because of the richness of the conquered territories in basic agricultural products such as wheat and barley, the central government did not have any problem in providing and distributing supplies among the troops on a regular basis.³⁸

2.2 The *Dīwān Al-Jund* Under the Early 'Abbāsids

There is no doubt that the accession of the 'Abbāsids to power marked a turning point with regard to many of the organizational procedures and concepts relating to the military institution, whether regarding the methods of registering the warriors in the *Dīwān* or regarding the concept and principles of the '*aṭā*' and *arzāq* as a whole. In order to identify the dimension of some of these changes, one has first to realize that the 'Abbāsid dynasty in its early years had at its disposal two types of military forces:

³⁶The *jarīb* is the quantity of crops harvested from a certain size of land. According to Māwardī (*Aḥkām*, p. 146), the size is around 60 x 60 cubits. For more information on measures of capacity in mediaeval Islam, see Hinz, *Islamische Masse und Gewichte: umgerechnet ins metrische System*, Leiden, 1955; Ehrenkreutz, "The Kurr System in Mediaeval Iraq", *JESHO*, V (1962), pp. 309-14; al-Rayyis, *al-Kharāj wa al-Nuḥum al-Māliyah li al-Dawlah al-Islāmīyah* Cairo, 1985).

³⁷Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 564; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 171; Ibn Sallām, *Amwāl*, p. 260.

³⁸Al-'Alī, *Tanẓīmā*, p. 147. The type of food distributed among the people varied according to the products of each province. For instance, while the Syrians had wheat, oil, and vinegar, the Egyptians had wheat, oil, vinegar, and honey each month.

1. The central army in Baghdad, which represented the standing army of the state. Its members entered the military service as a profession and thus received their pay on a monthly basis (*mushāharah*).
2. The Arab tribal forces in the various provinces which the 'Abbāsids inherited from the Umayyads and continued to be used in case of need whether to suppress internal rebellions or to secure the frontiers of the state.

2.2.1 The *Dīwān al-Jund* and the Methods of Enlisting the Central Armed Forces and Distributing Their Pay

2.2.1.1 The Methods of Enlisting the Soldiers into the *Dīwān Al-Jund*

By all military standards, the Khurāsānī army which brought the 'Abbāsids to power must be considered the first body reflecting the emergence of professionalism in the history of the Islamic armies. This is first and foremost because its warriors entered the military establishment as individuals and not as tribes or groups, as had been the case with the Islamic armies up until the end of the Umayyad Caliphate. One of the most important factors that played a vital role in the emergence of this phenomenon was the decision of Abū Muslim, from the beginning of the outbreak of the 'Abbāsīd revolt in 129/747, to adopt a new system for registering the revolutionary forces in the *Dīwān*. Unlike the traditional system, under which the warriors were registered in the *Dīwān* according to their tribal affiliation (*nasab*), the Khurāsānīs were enlisted in the new *Dīwān* according to their names, their fathers' names, and the

villages they came from.³⁹ By this tactical move, Abū Muslim was able to abolish the significance of the *nasab* as an important factor in the Muslim military institution, a factor which had previously done much to heighten the sense of tribal awareness and tribal loyalties in the army as well as to distinguish the Arab tribesmen socially and fiscally over non-Arab Muslims. According to the new system of registration, all Khurāsānī forces, regardless of their ethnic affiliations or *nasab*, entered the army on an equal basis and thus received equal rights, especially in matters of pay.⁴⁰

After establishing their rule in 132/750, the early 'Abbāsid Caliphs continued to apply the same rule in enlisting their central forces in the *Dīwān*, that is to say on a geographical basis rather than according to tribal affiliation. Nonetheless, starting from the time of al-Mu'taṣim (218-227/833-842), with the introduction of Central Asian troops on a large scale, many of whom had no link with any specific place either because of their enslavement or their previous nomadic mode of life, the 'Abbāsid authority seems to have adopted a new method of registration in addition to the one already in use. The new method stood on a racial basis (*ajnās*, sing. *jins*). Therefore, while the troops who had clear geographical origins' such as the Khurāsānīs, the Farāghīnah, the Maghāribah, and the Ushrūsānīyah, were registered

³⁹The account in Ṭabarī (*Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 358, 366) runs as follows: "Abū Muslim ordered Kāmil b. Muẓaffār to review the people in the fortress [of Mākhūwān], to enlist them according to their names and their fathers' names, to designate (*yansubūnahum*) them according to their villages, and to record all that in the register (*daftar*)."

⁴⁰Sharon, *'Abbāsid Revolution*, pp. 99, 102. At most times the *mawālī* in the Umayyad army received less '*aṭā*' than the Arabs. For some notes on the *mawālī* in the Umayyad army, see Pipes, *Slave Soldiers*, pp. 170-4.

according to their places of origin, the Central Asian troops, who had no place of origin, were most likely registered in the *Dīwān* according to their race, as they were simply and indiscriminately identified as Turks (*Atrāk*).⁴¹

2.2.1.2 The Organization of the Soldiers in the *Dīwān al-Jund*

Historical accounts covering the Khurāsānī military forces' formation during the 'Abbāsīd revolt and, later, their settlement in Baghdad indicate that they were organized from the start according to military contingents. Each of these contingents consisted of warriors who belonged to a group of villages within a close range or who came from the same town or district in Khurāsān and other eastern provinces.⁴²

In most cases, these contingents were commanded by leaders of the local community from which each contingent was raised, many of whom had been pro-'Abbāsīd activists during the propaganda period. Among these large and most noticeable contingents and their leaders were the Marwarrūdhiyyah,⁴³ the Jurjāniyyah,⁴⁴ the

⁴¹Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, pp. 29, 30, 32. While speaking of the registration of the non-Arab troops in the *Dīwān*, al-Māwardī (*Aḥkām*, p. 242) says, "If they were foreigners (*'Ajām*), they were not grouped according to *nasab*. Instead, they were grouped by one of two things: either race or place. Those distinguished by their race were such as the Turks and the Indians, who were further subdivided into smaller racial groups. Those distinguished by their places [of origin] were people like the Daylamīs and the Jabalīs, who were further subdivided by geographical region."

"وَأَنَّ كَانُوا عَجَمًا لَا يَجْتَمِعُونَ عَلَى نَسَبٍ، فَالَّذِي يَجْمَعُهُمْ عِنْدَ فَقْدِ النِّسَبِ أَحَدُ أَمْرَيْنِ: إِمَّا أَجْنَسًا، أَوْ بِلَادًا. فَالْمُتَمَيِّزُونَ بِالأَجْنَسِ، كَالْتُرْكَ وَالْهِنْدِ، ثُمَّ يَتَمَيَّزُ الأَتْرَاكُ أَجْنَسًا وَالهِنْدُ أَجْنَسًا. فَالْمُتَمَيِّزِينَ بِالبِلَادِ، كَالدَّيْلَمِ وَالْجَبَلِ، ثُمَّ يَتَمَيَّزُ الدَّيْلَمِ بِبِلَادَانَا، وَالْجَبَلِ بِبِلَادَانَا."

⁴²See e.g. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 355, 357, 366, 386.

⁴³They were ascribed to Marw al-Rūdh. Among the leaders of the Marwarrūdhiyyah were Khāzim b. Khuzaymah al-Tamīmī, al-Akhyam b. 'Abd al-'Azīz (*naqīb*), al-Aghlab b. Salim (*dā'i*), 'Abdallāh b. Shu'bah, Abū Khālīd al-Marwarrūdhī, Naḍalah b. Nu'aym al-Nahshalī, Ḥumayd al-Warṭhakānī, Muṣlim al-Arghandī, al-Ajtham al-Marwarrūdhī, al-Mujashir b. Muzāḥim, 'Abdallāh b. Shu'bah, and Shabīb b. Wāj al-Marwarrūdhī. *Akhbār*, pp. 219, 221, 229, 297, 335; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 436, 462, 509; vol. 8, pp. 29, 113, 142; Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 242.

Kirmāniyyah,⁴⁵ the Khwārazmiyyah,⁴⁶ the Bukhāriyyah,⁴⁷ the Farghāniyyah,⁴⁸ and the Baghīyyūn.⁴⁹ For better control as well as to facilitate the organization of the troops during peacetime and in war, each contingent was divided from the very beginning of the 'Abbāsīd revolution into smaller contingents, each consisting of about a thousand men.⁵⁰ Each of these smaller contingents was entrusted for all time to the direct command of an army officer (*qā'id*), who most often had a close attachment to his men, who usually consisted of his relatives, *mawālī*, and fellow citizens of the same village or town back in Khurāsān.⁵¹

Registering the warriors in the military register (*Dīwān al-Jund*) must have involved a great deal of precision and verification in 'Abbāsīd times. Unfortunately, however, not many details survive about the technique used in the early 'Abbāsīd period for enlisting the troops in the *Dīwān*. Nevertheless, by comparing the available

⁴⁴They were ascribed to Jurjān. Among the leaders of the Jurjāniyya were 'Abd al-Malik b. Yazīd al-'Atkī (known as Abū 'Awn), Marwān al-Jurjānī, Abū al-Mutawakkil al-Jurjānī, Khufāf b. Maṣṣūr al-Jurjānī, al-Ḥasan b. Ziyārah, and Abū Nuṣayr al-Jurjānī. *Akhhbār*, p. 330; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 445, 475; Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 21.

⁴⁵They were ascribed to Kirmān. Among their leaders was Būzān b. Khālīd al-Kirmānī. Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 20.

⁴⁶They were ascribed to Khwārazm. Among their leaders were al-Ḥārith b. Ruqād al-Khwārazmī and Salīm Abū Muḥammad al-Khwārazmī. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 67; Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 18.

⁴⁷They were ascribed to Bukhārā. Among their leaders was Salāmah b. Sam'ān al-Bukhārī. Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 17.

⁴⁸Among their leaders was 'Abbād al-Farghānī. Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 18.

⁴⁹They were ascribed to one of Marw al-Rūdh's villages called Baghshūr. Among their leaders were Ḥafṣ b. 'Uthmān and Ibrāhīm b. Jibrīl, who is mentioned as one of al-Rashīd's military commanders. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 258-9, 313; Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh*, vol. 1, pp. 85, 410; Jahshiyārī, *Wuzarā'*, p. 192. For further indications that the Khurāsānī forces were divided into units and that each one was under the command of a leader who was in complete control of his troops, see Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 412.

⁵⁰*Akhhbār*, pp. 337, 351; Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh*, vol. 1, p. 77; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 527; vol. 8, pp. 410-2.

fragmentary information related to the first century of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate with that concerning Umayyad times as well as that relating to a later period of 'Abbāsīd rule (the fourth and fifth centuries A.H.), we may build up a picture of the processes involved.

One of the common organizational procedures for enlisting the troops in the *Dīwān al-Jund*, employed from the first century of 'Abbāsīd rule and onward, was for each commander along with the troops under his command to be specified with a single register (*daftar* or *jarīdah*) within the main military register.⁵² Abū 'Abdallāh al-Khwārazmī (d. 387/997) in his encyclopaedia of the sciences (*Mafātih al-'Ulūm*), while speaking of the *Dīwān al-Jund* and the registers (*dafātir*) used within it, identifies this sort of register by saying:

One of the registers (*dafātir*) of the *Dīwān al-Jaysh* is the black register (*al-Jarīda al-Sawdā'*). This register is divided into dossiers (*tukassaru*) according to the various military leaders, as they stand each year, and it lists the names of the soldiers, their genealogies (*ansābihim*), their ethnic affiliations (*ajnāsīhim*), their distinguished physical characteristics (*ḥilāhim*), the amount of their pay (*arzāqihim*), the due date to receive it, and any other issue concerning those soldiers. This register is the master-register (*aṣl*) of the *Dīwān al-Jaysh*.⁵³

It may further be deduced from this passage that each military division was further divided into smaller registers in which each soldier had his own military record,

⁵¹ Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, pp. 16-22; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 462; vol. 8, p. 30.

⁵² Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 422; Hilāl al-Ṣābi', *Wizarā'*, pp. 17-8.

containing his physical description, identification, and the amount of his pay. Writers in military practice in a later 'Abbāsīd period, such as Qudāmah b. Ja'far (d. 328/932), Abū al-Ḥusayn Ishāq b. Sulaymān b. Wahb (d. c. 330/934), and al-Māwardī (d. 458/1058), indicate the manner of organizing the soldier's army record while speaking of the distinguishing features of men (*taḥliyah* or *ḥulā al-rijāl*).⁵⁴ Ibn Wahb, for example, points out that the process of *taḥliyah* involved, first, the registering of the man's name, followed by his home town (*balad*) or the military unit he belonged to, the amount of his pay, and his age in terms of whether he was young, an adolescent, or old.⁵⁵ Moreover, the soldier's record would also contain the smallest details of his physical description, including information on his height, complexion, eyes, nose, teeth, hands, arms, forehead, eyebrows, ears, and any distinctive facial features.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, if the soldier was a well-known person, being perhaps a *qā'id* or *amīr*, then the common practice was to omit a full description and simply to note his name and pay.⁵⁷ The purpose in noting the finest details of the soldier's physical features in these military records was to ensure that no possible confusion could occur between one soldier and another of the same

⁵³ "ومن دفاتر ديوان الجيش الجريدة السوداء وهي تكسر لقيادة-قيادة في كل سنة بأسمى الرجال وأسمائهم وأجناسهم وحلهم ومبالغ أرواقهم وقبوضهم وسائر أحوالهم وهو الأصل الذي يرجع إليه في هذا الديوان في كل شيء." Khwārazmī, *Mafāṭih*, p. 53; Bosworth, "Abū 'Abdallāh al-Khawārazmī", p. 125.

⁵⁴ According to Jahshiyārī (*Wuzarā'*, p. 72), the last Umayyad Caliph, Marwān b. Muḥammad was the first Caliph to order the listing of the distinguishing features of the troops (*taḥliyat al-jund*) in the army register. This procedure continued to be practised during the first century of 'Abbāsīd rule and onward. For evidence relating to the first century of 'Abbāsīd rule, see Ibn Qutaybah, *Imāmah*, pt. 2, p. 191; Ibn Abī al-Rabī', *Sulūk al-Mamālik*, p. 100.

⁵⁵ Ibn Wahb, *Burhān*, p. 298.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 299; Qudāmah, *al-Kharāj*, pp. 24-6; Māwardī, *Aḥkām*, p. 214.

⁵⁷ Ibn Wahb, *Burhān*, p. 300; Māwardī, *Aḥkām*, p. 214.

name.⁵⁸ Moreover, it helped to identify any intruder (*dakhīl*), substitute (*badīl*), or even spy from the enemy camp and to prevent such persons from insinuating themselves into the ranks. In addition, it facilitated identification of the troops in battle and their deployment in the field.⁵⁹

2.2.1.3 The Administrators of the *Dīwān al-Jund*

The responsibility for administering the *Dīwān al-Jund* was placed in the hands of highly qualified secretaries usually referred to as *Kuttāb al-Jund* (sing. *Kātib al-Jund*).⁶⁰ Because the main duty of the *Kātib al-Jund* was to organize the administrative affairs of the warriors rather than lead them in the battlefield, there were certain qualifications that he had to obtain so that he could perform his work efficiently. Ibn Abī al-Rabīʿ, who is said to have written his book *Sulūk al-Mamālik fī Tadbīr al-Mamālik* in the time of al-Muʿtaṣim and dedicated it to him, lists some of these qualifications. They included knowledge in *ḥulā al-rijāl* (the distinguishing features of the men), *nuʿūtuhum* (their characteristics), and *shiyāt al-dawāb* (lit. “the distinguishing marks of animals”, i.e. the ability to distinguish good from poor animals). Moreover, the *Kātib al-Jund* must also have expertise in the different types of weapons and their condition, conversance with the different languages used by the

⁵⁸ Ibn Qutaybah, *Imāmāh*, pt 2, p. 190; Māwardī, *Aḥkām*, p. 241; Ibn Wahb, *Burhān*, p. 300.

⁵⁹ Bosworth, “Recruitment”, 71; Hoenerbach, “Zur Heeresverwaltung”, p. 271; Tantum, “Muslim Warfare”, p. 195.

⁶⁰ Their immediate superior was also a *Kātib*, sometimes referred to as *Ṣāḥib al-Jund* or *Ṣāḥib Dīwān al-Jaysh*.

troops, and, finally, knowledge of military hierarchy, so that he could allocate ranks.⁶¹

Since one of the prime functions of the *Dīwān al-Jund* was the registration of troops and the issuing of their salaries, the financial side was very important and one aspect of the *Kūtīb*'s work was to act as paymasters. It is, therefore, not surprising to find that knowledge of arithmetic (*ḥisāb al-taqdīr*) was a very important requirement for the *Kātib al-Jund*, as it was essential in his work.⁶²

<i>A Listing of the Kūtīb in Charge of the Dīwān al-Jund in Baghdad</i>		
<i>Historical Period</i>	<i>Official</i>	<i>Other Information</i>
Early days of 'Abbāsid revolt in Khurāsān, 129/747	Abū Šālīḥ Kāmil b. al-Muẓaffar. He was succeeded by Abū Naṣr Mālīk b. al-Haytham.	First, Abū Šālīḥ was in charge of all administrative affairs during the time of the revolt. Later, for the sake of better organization and efficiency, the administrative duties became divided. Then Abū Naṣr took charge of enlisting the soldiers, managing the booty, distributing payments, and eliminating all dubious persons from the register. ⁶³
The revolutionary troops marching toward Iraq (Qaḥṭabah's army), 130-132/748-750	Khālīd b. Barmak	He was in charge of collecting the <i>kharāj</i> , counting the booty, and distributing to soldiers their share. ⁶⁴
Abū al-'Abbās, 132-136/750-754	Abū Jahm	Abū Jahm was appointed by Abū Salamah al-Khallāl in Kūfah in 132/750. ⁶⁵

⁶¹Ibn Abī al-Rabī', *Sulūk*, p. 100. The *Kātib al-Jund*'s need of these qualifications is indicated in the report of an interesting conversation between 'Amr b. Mas'adah, al-Rashīd's vizier, and a traveller who was later put in charge of the *Dīwān al-Kharāj*. For the full story, see Ibn Qutaybah, *Imāmah*, pt. 2, pp. 188-91. For the terms used to describe the features of people and animals, see Qudāmah, *al-Kharāj*, pp. 24-9; Bosworth, "Abū 'Abdallāh al-Khawārazmī", pp. 8-164.

⁶²Ibn Qutaybah, *Imāmah*, pt. 2, p. 189. In his *Risālah* about the *kūtīb*, Jāḥiẓ (*Rasā'il*, vol. 1, pt. 2, p. 204) mentions that Ibrāhīm al-Ḥāsib, one of the army's secretaries in the time of al-Ma'mūn, was tutored in all sorts of *belles-lettres*, but learnt only arithmetic amongst the sciences.

⁶³*Akḥbār*, p. 279; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 366.

⁶⁴*Akḥbār*, pp. 333, 349.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, p. 376.

	Khālīd b. Barmak ⁶⁶	He was given responsibility for both the <i>Dīwān al-Jund</i> and the <i>Dīwān al-Kharāj</i> . ⁶⁷
Al-Manṣūr, 136-158/754-775	‘Abd al-Malik b. Ḥumayd	Given responsibility for both the <i>Dīwān al-Jund</i> and the <i>Dīwān al-Kharāj</i> . ⁶⁸
	Ishāq b. Šālīḥ b. Mujālīd	Only the <i>Dīwān al-Jund</i> . ⁶⁹
Al-Mahdī, 158-169/775-785	Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Kātib	The <i>Dīwān al-Jund</i> . ⁷⁰
	‘Abd al-Jabbār b. Shu‘ayb	The <i>Dīwān al-Jund</i> . ⁷¹
Mūsā al-Hādī, 169-170/785-786	‘Alī b. ‘Isā b. Māhān	The <i>Dīwān al-Jund</i> and <i>Ḥijābah</i> (gatekeeping). ⁷²
Al-Rashīd, 170-193/786-809	Abū Šālīḥ Yaḥyā, with Ismā‘īl b. Šubayḥ to assist him	Both the <i>Dīwān al-Jund</i> and the <i>Dīwān al-Kharāj</i> . ⁷³
	Ibn al-Shukhayr and ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Abdallāh al-Ṭā‘ī	They were in charge of the <i>Dīwān al-Jund</i> at the time al-Rashīd’s death. ⁷⁴
Al-Amīn, 193-198/809-814	Al-Faḍl b. Abī al-Rabī‘	In charge of all the <i>dawāwīm</i> and the pay of the troops. ⁷⁵
Al-Ma’mūn, 198-218/814-833 (before returning to Baghdad)	Ibrāhīm al-Ḥāsib and al-Ḥasan b. ‘Abī al-Musharraf	In charge of both the <i>Dīwān al-Jund</i> and the <i>Dīwān al-Kharāj</i> . ⁷⁶

⁶⁶According to Jahshiyārī (*Wuzarā’*, p.89), Khālīd was the first to use the record (*daftar*) in the *dawāwīm* instead of the separate sheet. "وكان سبيل ما يُكتب في الدواوين أن يكتب في صحف، فكان خاند أول من جعله في دفاتر"

⁶⁷Jahshiyārī, *Wuzarā’*, p. 89.

⁶⁸Ibn Khayyāt, *Tārīkh*, p. 354. In the same account Ibn Khayyāt indicates that ‘Abd al-Malik used to be in charge of *Rasā’il al-Futūḥ*.

⁶⁹Ibn Khayyāt, *Tārīkh*, p. 354. Ibn Khayyāt indicates that Ishāq’s uncle, Sulaymān, was in charge of the State Treasury and that after his death, Ishāq’s brother, Ibrāhīm, took his place and continued until the death of al-Manṣūr.

⁷⁰Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 183; *K. al-‘Uyūn*, p. 281. Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Kātib is mentioned again as one al-Hādī’s *Kuttāb* but without further details of the post he held, in Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 6, p. 184.

⁷¹Ibn Khayyāt, *Tārīkh*, p. 360.

⁷²Jahshiyārī, *Wuzarā’*, p. 167; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p.189.

⁷³Ibn Khayyāt, *Tārīkh*, p. 382. According to Jahshiyārī (*Wuzarā’*, pp. 177-8), al-Rashīd first entrusted all the *dawāwīm* (bureaus) except the *Dīwān al-Khātām* (the Bureau of the Seal) to Yaḥyā b. Khālīd, who in turn placed Abū Šālīḥ in charge of the *Dīwān al-Jund*.

⁷⁴Jahshiyārī, *Wuzarā’*, p. 277.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, p. 289; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 369.

⁷⁶Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā’il*, vol. 1, pt. 2, p. 204.

Al-Ma'mūn (after returning to Baghdad)	Ḥumayd b. 'Abd al-Karīm	The <i>Dīwān al-Jund</i> in Baghdad. ⁷⁷
Al-Mu'taṣim, 218-227/833-842	Khālīd b. Zayd	The <i>Dīwān al-Jund</i> . Khālīd was also a very well-known poet. ⁷⁸

Table 2.1: A Listing of the *Kūtāb* in Charge of the *Dīwān al-Jund* in Baghdad

2.2.1.4 The Methods of Distributing the Soldier's Pay

The processes of distributing the pay allowances among the warriors would start when their pay fell due. At this point, the secretaries of the army started to take out and review the registers of the various military units, after the names and details of the soldiers had been organized in each register according to the method previously mentioned and with an indication at the end of each register of the number of recipients and the total of their pay.⁷⁹ Next, the secretaries would start to draw up a document of authorization (*ṣakk*, pl. *ṣikāk*) containing the number of the recipients, along with the total amount of cash needed for their payments. This legal document was then presented to the Caliph or his vizier, who, if satisfied with its contents, would then place his official seal (*khatm*) at the end of it and forward it to the Paymaster General of the Treasury (*Ṣāhib Bayt al-Māl*).⁸⁰ After establishing the

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 206-8. Among the *Kuttāb* who worked in the *Dīwān al-Jund* at that time and who are mentioned by al-Jāḥiẓ were Maḥmūd b. 'Abd al-Karīm (who was discharged from his position because he prejudiced the Khurāsānī troops by reducing their payments and unjustly eliminating many from the *Dīwān*), Zayd b. Ayyūb al-Kātib (who worked for forty years in the *Dīwān al-Jund*), and al-Ma'lā b. Ayyūb (who was highly praised by al-Jāḥiẓ for his honesty and uprightness).

⁷⁸Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 11, p. 52.

⁷⁹Ibn Wahb, *Burhān*, p. 299.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, p. 300; Qudāmāh, *Kharāj*, p. 36. Evidence that this sort of *ṣakk* was used in paying the warriors during the century of the 'Abbāsīd rule is found in al-Iṣfahānī (*Aghānī*, vol. 18, p. 43). He reports that Dī'bīl al-Khuzā'ī read a poem to the troops who mutinied in the days of Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī over the delay of their pay, a line of which reads:

(footnote continued)

authenticity of the official mark, the Paymaster General issued the amount indicated in the document to the *Majlis al-I'tā'* (Awards Office), located within the department of the army. One of the main functions of the *Majlis al-I'tā'*, as is obvious from its name, was its responsibility to distribute the pay among the troops.⁸¹ The actual distribution of pay would be carried out by officials known as *munfiqīn*⁸² or *mu'tīn*⁸³ (paymasters), who were assisted by other officials known as *'urrād* (sing. *'arḍ*).⁸⁴ Within this context, Aḥmad b. Nāqīd, a *mawlā* of Banū Aghlab, narrates that under Caliph al-Rashīd the troops in Qayrawān mutinied after their pay fell into arrears. They continued to do so until "the *'urrād* and the *mu'tīn* came carrying with them money that had been collected from the land tax (*kharāj*) in Egypt. So, when the troops received their pay, they dispersed."⁸⁵

"Your pay document (*ṣakk*) has been sealed; / the resolve is right, so there is no cause for wrath".
يذكر الأصفهاني أن دعبيل الخزاعي أنشد شعرا بلند الذين شعبوا في أيام إبراهيم بن المهدي (202-203هـ) مطالبين آباء بصرف أرزاقهم فعمما قال: قد ختم
الصك بأرزاقكم وصحح العزم فلا تسخطوا

It is not difficult to infer from this verse that the meaning of *ṣakk* here is different from the fiscal meaning of "personal written order for payment", which had been used on a few occasions during Umayyad times to pay the stipends and the food subsidies of the warriors and resulted in many problems (Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, s.v. *ṣakk*; Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. 4, pp. 208-9; al-'Alī, *Tanẓīmāṭ*, p.168). Instead, the meaning of *ṣakk* here is, as Khwārazmī (*Mafātiḥ*, p. 53) identifies it, "an inventory (*'amal*) prepared for every issue of pay. It contained the names and total number of all those entitled to receive something, together with the amount of cash needed for this, and the ruler set his official seal at the end of it, thereby authorizing the payment of their salaries."

"عمل يعمل لكل طمع يجمع فيه أسامى المستحقين وعقدتهم ومبلغ ما لهم ويوقع السلطان في أخره بإطلاق الرزق لهم."

⁸¹ Ibn Wahb, *Burhān*, p. 300; Hilāl, *Wuzarā'*, p. 27.

⁸² Ibn Wahb, *Burhān*, p. 300.

⁸³ Harthamī, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 38; Khwārazmī, *Mafātiḥ*, p. 38.

⁸⁴ Harthamī, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 38.

⁸⁵ Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 276. "حتى أتاهم العراض والمعطين ومعهم مال من خراج مصر، فلما أعطوا تفرقوا."

In addition to their role in inspecting the troops by reviewing them with their mounts and weapons and testing their military skills, the *'urrāḍ* were also responsible, before distributing the pay, to examine the warriors' physical descriptions to see if they corresponded with the descriptions in the register.⁸⁶ Those men whose physical features agreed with what was written in the register would be given their pay, but if they did not, such men would be considered as intruders or substitutes (*dukhalā* or *budalā*).⁸⁷

When the processes of distributing the pay among the troops came to an end, the *mu'tīn* or *munfiqān* started preparing a financial report to be sent to the *Dīwān al-Jund*. In this report they indicated the amount that had been distributed and the amount that had been saved from the payments of dead soldiers, absentees, and those whose descriptions did not match those in the register.⁸⁸

The currency used in paying the allowance of the early 'Abbāsid troops varied from one province to another, owing to the 'Abbāsids' continuing use of bimetallism in their monetary policy. Thus, in Iraq and eastern provinces, which once were Persian territory and where silver was widely used, the troops were paid in silver *dirhams*,

⁸⁶Hilāl, *Wuzarā*, p. 18.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*; Ibn Wahb, *Burhān*, p. 300. Administratively the *'urrāḍ* belonged to a bureau known as the *Dīwān al-'Arḍ*, which was closely linked to the *Dīwān al-Jund*. The sources disagree on the date when the bureau was first established. While Ya'qūbī (*Mushākalat al-Nās*, p. 31) indicates that Caliph al-Ma'mūn established the *Dīwān al-'Arḍ*, Jahshiyārī, (*Wuzarā*, p. 289) mentions that al-Faḍl b. al-Rabī' b. Yūnus was in charge of the *Dīwān al-'Arḍ* under Caliph al-Amīn. For an exhaustive study of the role of the *Dīwān al-'Arḍ* in a later 'Abbāsid period, see Bosworth, "Recruitment", pp. 70-7; Tantum, "Muslim Warfare", pp. 195-6.

⁸⁸Ibn Wahb, *Burhān*, p. 300.

whereas in the western Roman provinces such as Syria and Egypt, along with Arabia, where the taxes continued to be collected in gold, the troops were paid in gold *dinars*.⁸⁹ As under the Umayyads, the rate of exchange between the two currencies was also subject to fluctuation during the first century of the 'Abbāsid rule. We are told that the gold *dinar* was worth 22 silver *dirhams* in the time of Caliph al-Rashīd (170-193/787-808).⁹⁰ However, in 204/819, under al-Ma'mūn, the gold *dinar* was equivalent to only 15 *dirhams*.⁹¹

2.2.1.5 The Timetable for Distributing the Soldier's Pay

The timetable for distributing the troops' pay seems to have varied from one Caliph to another, depending primarily on the financial situation of the central government. During the reign of the first 'Abbāsid Caliph, Abū al-'Abbās, all historical indications seem to agree that the Khurāsānī forces were paid on a monthly basis. The writer of *Akhbār*, for example, notes that when Abū Salamah al-Khallāl, the first 'Abbāsid vizier, addressed the revolutionary forces in Kūfah, one of the promises he made to them was that he would make the salary (*rizq*) of each man 80 *dirhams* per month.⁹² This monthly system of remuneration is confirmed by Ibn Qutaybah, who notes that when Abū Muslim came from Khurāsān to Kūfah at the request of the Caliph, he was accompanied by 10,000 of Khurāsānīs, who received their pay at the

⁸⁹Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 197, 201, 223, 226, 288.

⁹⁰Jahshiyārī, *Wuzarā'*, p. 223.

⁹¹Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, pp. 162-7.

⁹²*Akhbār*, p. 276.

outset (*ghurrah*) of each month.⁹³ Payment of the Khurāsānī troops on a monthly basis seems to have continued throughout the early years of the second 'Abbāsīd Caliph, al-Manṣūr.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, there is evidence that the arrangement became greatly disrupted at a later stage in his rule, as is indicated by certain remarks found in Ibn al-Muqaffa's *Risālah fi al-Ṣaḥābah*. In this *Risālah*, the author advises the Caliph of the great need to establish a fixed timetable for the troops to receive their allowance, so that the long waiting and complaining amongst the troops might come to an end. As for the period, Ibn al-Muqaffa suggests that "it could be every three months, four months, or as the Caliph sees proper to do."⁹⁵ Although sources do not mention whether the Caliph accepted or rejected the suggestion of Ibn al-Muqaffa, it seems only reasonable that the 'Abbāsīd authority must have had to specify a certain due date for the troops to receive their pay. This fact may be deduced from what al-Shaybānī (132-189/750-807) indicates while explaining the adjudication of accidental homicide committed by one of the recipients of the regular pay (*ahl al-dīwān*) and process of paying the blood-money (*diyyah*) to the family of the person killed. Thus, he writes, "If he [the killer] receives his salary on a monthly basis, he would be liable to pay one third of the blood-money every year, i.e. one sixth every six months. As for him who receives his pay every six months, he would pay one sixth of the blood-money every six months."⁹⁶ In understanding this passage and the

⁹³ Ibn Qutaybah, *Imāmīyah*, p. 152.

⁹⁴ Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, vol. 10, p. 106.

⁹⁵ Ibn al-Muqaffa, *Risālah*, p. 123.

⁹⁶ Shaybānī, *al-Jām' al-Kabīr*, p. 208. (باب عقل الجنائيات) "لو كانوا أهل رزق في كل شهر، قضى بالدية في أرزاقهم في كل سنة الثلث في كل سنة أشهر سلس الدية، وأن كان رزقهم في كل سنة أشهر آخر من أرزاقهم ففي كل سنة أشهر سلس الدية."

fact that there is no indication whatsoever that the Khurāsānī forces in Baghdad were paid according to two timetables, only one of two conclusions is possible. The first possibility is that when the author mentions the two due dates, he may be comparing the timetable in Baghdad with that in other provinces. The second possibility, which is more convincing, is that the due date for distributing the warriors' allowances in Baghdad during the period between the reigns of al-Mahdī and al-Rashīd (during which the author lived most of his life) was subject to fluctuation and the common timetable was either each month or every six months.

After the death of al-Rashīd and the outbreak of the civil war (194-198/813-817), the timetable for distributing the warriors' pay fell into complete chaos. This confusion was mainly the result of the circumstances prevailing during the civil war and the awareness of both rivals of the importance of utilizing the wealth that was in their hands to both enhance the support of their men and also attract the manpower they badly needed. The direct effects of these factors were not only incessant increases in the pay of their men, but also payments were granted to them whenever they asked for "advance payments", for periods of service ranging between four months and eighteen months.⁹⁷ However, after the end of the war and the return of al-Ma'mūn to Baghdad, the timetable seems to have settled to a basis of six months.⁹⁸

⁹⁷For four months, see Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 412, 496-7; six months, vol. 8, p. 543; twelve months, vol. 8, p. 370; eighteen months, vol. 8, p. 370.

⁹⁸Ibn Ṭayfūr, *Baghdād*, p. 10; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 544, 553.

2.2.1.6 *The Soldier's Reactions to Their Pay Falling Into Arrears*

One of the characteristics of the 'Abbāsīd standing army was that the allegiance and discipline of the troops were always very closely connected to the ability of their sovereigns to pay their salaries in a constant manner and on due dates. Therefore, their pay was the first charge on the State Treasury as, if for any reason they were not paid on time, they rioted dangerously.⁹⁹ However, as with their predecessors the Umayyads, paying the troops' allowances regularly and on due dates was not always an easy matter for the 'Abbāsīds. The first indication of this problem comes from as early as the time of the first 'Abbāsīd Caliph, Abū 'Abbās. Thus, referring to such a crisis al-Ābī (d. 421/1030), for example, points out that the Khurāsānī troops stationed in Anbār mutinied after their payments fell into arrears, which led Caliph Abū 'Abbās to send a message to those soldiers on which he reprimanded them and at the same time promised them to pay their pay soon.¹⁰⁰ The same problem recurred during the reign of al-Manṣūr when al-Ṭabarī records, "The governor of Armenia wrote to al-Manṣūr that his troops had mutinied against him, had broken the locks of the Treasury, and taken what was in it."¹⁰¹ Under al-Rashīd also, we are told that immediately upon his accession to the throne, his vizier, Yaḥyā b. Barmak, wrote a

⁹⁹Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 178, 412, 419; Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, p. 418.

¹⁰⁰Ābī, *Nathr al-Durar*, vol. 3, p. 80. "بلغ المغترين عن أبرمتهم بأعجاركهم، أم عظمت نعمة الله عليكم في دينكم ودنياكم، فلا تكونوا عظة العقلاء ورواية الجاهلاء، فتحبط أعمالكم وتخيب أمالككم، والعطاء غير مؤخر عن وقتة إن شاء الله."

¹⁰¹Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 97.

letter to be circulated all over the empire. One of the promises included in the letter was that the new Caliph would be punctual in distributing their pay on its due date.¹⁰²

The problem of the troops' payments falling into arrears grew much worse after the reign of al-Rashīd and the direct result was always the mutiny of the army to the degree that this action became one of the trademarks of the 'Abbāsīd military institution. Because of its seriousness and deep impact on the stability of the state's political and economic life, this problem could not pass without being noticed by the chronicles of that time. For Ibn al-Muqaffa', the delay of pay only created dissatisfaction among the troops and reduced their readiness to face the enemies. In the view of Ibn Abī al-Rabī', the undesirable consequences were three: the army extorted money from civilians by force, they deserted to whomever would pay them, and they became involved in commerce, so that they would become of no use in time of need.¹⁰³

2.2.1.7 Reasons Behind the Troops' Pay Falling into Arrears and Solutions Applied

Although the reasons that caused the troops' payments to fall into arrears and thus led to their mutiny were various and differed in nature from one Caliph to another, it seems that there were two principal reasons that prevailed under almost all 'Abbāsīd Caliphs. The first was that in spite of the immense revenue flowing into the central Treasury, the 'Abbāsīds, with the exception of Caliph al-Manṣūr, did not seek to

¹⁰²*Ibid.*, p. 231. "وَيَقْسِمُ أَعْطَاكُمْ فَيْكُمْ عِنْدَ اسْتِحْقَاقِكُمْ". For more examples from the beginning of al-Rashīd's reign, see Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 411.

¹⁰³Ibn Muqaffa', *Risālah*, p. 123; Ibn Abī al-Rabī', *Masālik*, p. 105.

reserve a part of these funds for emergencies.¹⁰⁴ To the contrary, the central Treasury suffered on many occasions from deficiencies, which came as a natural result of mismanagement, either because of weak financial surveillance over governors and high officials or through the excessive use of funds as a means to satisfying and gaining the allegiance of their courtiers.¹⁰⁵

The second reason for delay in payments to the troops, which was purely administrative, was that for much of the period of the first century of their rule, the 'Abbāsids maintained the practice of paying all of their central forces at the same time. Thus, besides the financial strain that fell on the Treasury every pay-session, any delay in paying the troops led eventually to collective mutiny at the same time. This problem was, however, resolved during the reign of al-Mu'taḍid (279-289/892-902) when his vizier, Abū al-Qāsim 'Ubaydallāh b. Sulaymān, differentiated between the pay dates of the various troops. Consequently, any delay would only

¹⁰⁴For example, al-Mas'ūdī (*Murūj*, vol. 2, p. 175) records, "Al-Mahdī laid his hand on the allotments until he wasted all the funds that had been left to him by al-Manṣūr along with what was collected during his own days. So when there was no money left in the Treasury, Abū Ḥārithah al-Hindī, the Paymaster General in the State Treasury, came and threw the keys of the Treasury down in al-Mahdī's presence saying to him, 'What is the meaning of keys for an empty Treasury?' Al-Mahdī then detailed twenty of his servants to collect the taxes. Within a period of a few days, funds flowed in and then al-Mahdī said to his Treasury chief, 'Did you think that the funds would not flow for use when we needed them?' So Abū al-Ḥārithah replied, 'If an emergency arose, it would not wait until you sent someone to collect funds and bring them to you.'

¹⁰⁵For some examples, see Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 384, 652-3.

lead to the mutiny of the concerned unit or group of soldiers, rather than to mutiny by the all of troops.¹⁰⁶

To cope with the financial difficulties and in order to be able to pay the salaries of their troops, the 'Abbāsids resorted to several solutions, among them the following:

1. The most convenient method for the 'Abbāsid Caliphs was to exact loans from the wealthy people, a practice which started as early as the first 'Abbāsid Caliph and became more commonly used from the time of al-Ma'mūn.¹⁰⁷

2. Alternatively, they might postpone the paying of the troops to the time when the central Treasury received the taxes due to it, especially the land tax (*kharāj*), which started to be levied in midsummer with the harvesting of the crops.¹⁰⁸ An example of this practice relates to the events of 200/815. In that year, as al-Ṭabarī reports, when 'Alī b. Hishām entered Baghdad on behalf of al-Ḥasan b. Sahl, he “promised the Ḥarbīyyah troops that he would pay their six months' salaries as soon as the tax

¹⁰⁶Ibn Wahb, *Burhān*, p. 301: "وكان الجند فيما تقدم يفضلون في الأرزاق وشهورهم واحدة، وكانت استحقاقاتهم تنواري في وقت واحد، فمن تأخر عنهم ما لهم اجتمعت كلمتهم على الطلب، ولقي معاليهم جلاً من الشعب. فلما تقلد أبو القاسم عبيد الله بن سليمان... للمعتضد بالله لطف لتفرقة أرزاقهم والمخالفة بين أوقات استحقاقهم."

¹⁰⁷For some examples relating to Abū al-'Abbās, see Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *al-'Iqd*, vol. 5, p. 62; relating to al-Ma'mūn, see Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 496-7; Ya'qūbī, *Mushākalat al-Nās*, pp. 29-31; relating to Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī, see Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, vol. 8, p. 43; relating to al-Mu'taṣim, see Tanūkhī, *Nishwār al-Muḥāḍarah*, vol. 8, p. 48.

¹⁰⁸The financial calendar for land tax (*kharāj*) was a solar one. Ibn Wahb (*Burhān*, p. 360) explains the use of the solar system by saying: "Because it always relates to one state of circumstances, it does not rotate so that the winter months come in the summer and the summer months come in winter. This is because it runs according to the sun." "لأنها أبداً على حال واحدة، لا تدور فتصير شهور الشتاء فيها صيفاً، والصيف شتاءً." For more on this subject, see Levy, *Social Structure*, p. 312.

revenue (*ghallah*, lit. “yield of crops”) was gathered.”¹⁰⁹ Moreover, in 201/816, ‘Īsā b. Abī Muḥammad b. Abī Khālīd, the leader of the Baghdadi troops, asked al-Ḥasan b. Sahl to grant him, his family, and his fellows guarantee of safety as well as the payment of six months’ salaries to his fellows, his troops, and the remainder of the Baghdad troops as soon as the tax revenue was collected.¹¹⁰

3. The Caliph might substitute foodstuffs such as wheat and barley as part of the troops’ payments. This sort of solution was used more than once after the end of the civil war. The first indication comes in 202/817, when, it is reported that, after receiving the pledge of allegiance from the people of Baghdad, Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī promised the army that he would pay them salaries (*arzāq*) for six months. Nevertheless, he later reneged on his promise. So, when the troops realized this, they mutinied against him, which led Ibrāhīm to give each man 200 *dirhams*. He also wrote to the Sawād on behalf of some amongst them for the equivalent of the amount of pay owing to them in the form of wheat and barley.¹¹¹

4. Another device was to make the army commander bear all the expenses of the campaign that he led, including the salaries of his troops, out of his own money. We are told, for example, that after his return to Baghdad, al-Ma’mūn summoned ‘Īsā b. Muḥammad b. Abī Khālīd to assemble an army from amongst the *abnā’* of

¹⁰⁹Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 544.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 553.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 557. For another example, under al-Ma’mūn, see Ibn Ṭayfūr, *Baghdād*, p. 10.

Ḥarbīyyah to face the rebellion of Bābak al-Khurramī, and to pay the salaries of those troops from his own funds.¹¹²

2.2.2 The Tribal Armies and Developments in the Traditional System of 'Aṭā' and *Arzāq*

One of the significant developments that came with the establishment of the 'Abbāsid dynasty was the change that occurred within the whole concept of 'aṭā' and *arzāq*, clearly reflecting not only changes in the pay system but, more importantly, in the idea and structure of the whole Islamic army. This is most obvious in the indiscriminate use of both terms in the historical sources when speaking about the social life of the people or the payment of the troops, whether in Baghdad or in the various provinces.¹¹³ In Baghdad the term most commonly used when dealing with the payments of the troops was the term *rizq*.¹¹⁴ However, the concept of *rizq* was no longer applied to the foodstuffs that used to be given to the warriors and their families since the time of Caliph 'Umar. Rather, it indicated a cash allowance received only by those who were registered in the *Dīwān* and

¹¹²Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 462. The same practice was repeated when Caliph al-Ma'mūn appointed the general Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd to lead an expedition against Bābak in 213/828. Muḥammad is reported to have assembled and armed men using his own funds. Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 379.

¹¹³As far as we can tell, the terms 'aṭā' and *rizq* are mentioned simultaneously three times by the historical sources during the advance of the 'Abbāsid army toward Iraq. Nevertheless, all these accounts actually concerned the Syrian troops in the time of the Umayyads (*Akhbār*, pp. 229, 320, 344). In reporting events in 'Abbāsid times, both terms tend to be used together except in one place in which al-Ṭabarī mentions that when al-Amīn came to power, "He wrote to Ṣāliḥ b. 'Alī to treat the soldiers well and to distribute their *arzāq* and 'aṭā' among them." Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 3, p. 770.

¹¹⁴*Akhbār*, p. 376; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 365, 370, 384, 419, 443, 496.

engaged in active service in the army all the year around.¹¹⁵ That the warriors in Baghdad did not receive any foodstuffs is clearly indicated by Ibn al-Muqaffa', who points out that the pay of the troops was inadequate owing to the high prices of cereals and fodder in Iraq. Thus, to prevent more financial upheaval for the Treasury and to satisfy the troops, Ibn al-Muqaffa' suggests that part of their salaries (*arzāq*) be deducted and given instead in the form of cereals and fodder.¹¹⁶

However, the term '*atā*' did not disappear completely from the 'Abbāsid state fiscal dictionary, but it remained in use with two connotations. First, within a civil context, the '*atā*' simply meant the grants or donations that the 'Abbāsid Caliphs would give in a selective manner and more of an honorary than a concrete nature to some of the descendants of the Prophet's family (both 'Alid and 'Abbāsid branches), their courtiers, religious personnel, and some of the Arab aristocratic families such as those in Makkah and Madīnah. Within this framework, the '*atā*' or the civil pension was no longer a right that could be claimed or inherited from father to son as it used to be during former times. Instead, as often happened, it could be discontinued either through the death of recipients or simply on account of the displeasure of the Caliph or his officials with its beneficiaries. Within this context, al-Iṣfahānī, for example,

¹¹⁵This new condition was one of the foundations for the transformation of the Islamic army from a tribal army, standing on the concept of "a nation in arms", into a professional one made up of salaried fighters (*artizāq*), who might be Arabs, Iranians, or people of any other race. The recipients were called *murtazaqah* (sing. *murtazaq*) and they seem to have formed the nucleus of the 'Abbāsid standing armies. See Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 142, 320.

narrates that one day Caliph al-Mahdī gave al-Mughīrah b. Ḥabīb, a close intimate of the Caliph, 10,000 pensions (*farīdah*) and asked him to distributed them to whom he wished among the people of Madīnah. A poet by the name of 'Abdallāh b. Sālīm al-Khayyāṭ came to al-Mughīrah asking him for one. In response, al-Mughīrah offered 'Abdallāh either to include himself or his son. On reflection, therefore, as he was an old man and the number of his days in this world was running out, 'Abdallāh asked for it to be given to his son Yūnus, who thus received 50 *dinars*.¹¹⁷ The fact that the 'aṭā' was no longer a vested right is also supported by reports that al-Manṣūr stopped altogether the 'aṭā' of the people of Makkah and Madīnah, seemingly after the revolt of Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyyah in 145/762, which continued to be denied them until 160/776 when al-Mahdī resumed their payment.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, this resumption of the 'aṭā' for the people of Ḥijāz seems most unlikely to have involved any admission of their natural right to such privileges, but rather to have been made for political considerations. In addition, to prevent them from joining any future revolt, the 'Abbāsids always endeavoured to present themselves as the defenders of the *Sunnah* and restorers of orthodoxy, from which the Umayyads had deviated. So, cultivating the favour of religious figures, contracting marriages of

¹¹⁶ Ibn al-Muqaffā', *Risālah*, pp. 123-4. There is no indication that the troops in Baghdad received foodstuffs except on two occasions, once under al-Ma'mūn and the second time during the short reign of Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī. However, as previously noted, both cases occurred in unusual circumstances, when the government did not have enough money for the troops' salaries. Moreover, there is no indication in the topography of Baghdad of any food warehouses such as there used to be in many of the garrison cities during Umayyad times.

¹¹⁷ Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, vol. 19, p. 282. "أما المغيرة بن حبيب فكان لصيقاً بأمر المؤمنين المهدي، وله عطاء أهل المدينة، وكان يوليه القسوم. وأعطاه ألف فريضة يضعها حيث شاء، ففرضة مشهور بالمدينة، وقد جاءه عبدالله بن سالم الخياط، فطلب منه أن يفرض له، فخيرته المغيرة أن يفرض له أو لآلته. يونس، فقال: أنا شيخ كبير، هامة اليوم أو غداً أفرض لابني. ففرض لآلته يونس خمسين ديناراً."

political expedience with influential tribes, and paying their '*aṭā*' were some of the methods the 'Abbāsids followed with the people of Ḥijāz to achieve their ends.¹¹⁹

Second, the '*aṭā*' within a military context was a term used to denote the pay of the tribal forces. Although eliminating the Arabs from the *Dīwān* and cutting off their '*aṭā*' are closely associated in the historical sources with Caliph al-Mu'taṣim, a close examination proves that the roots of such action had been laid as early as the time of the second 'Abbāsīd Caliph, al-Manṣūr. Thus, what happened in the time of al-Mu'taṣim was in fact just the completion of a process that had begun much earlier. Although historical sources do not evidence any significant use of the tribal forces during the reign of the first 'Abbāsīd Caliph, Abū al-'Abbās, nonetheless, there are many indications that a large proportion of these forces, whether in Iraq, Syria, or Egypt, continued to receive their traditional '*aṭā*'. In Iraq, Abū al-'Abbās not only promised the Iraqi warriors that he would be punctual in distributing their '*aṭā*' at due times,¹²⁰ but he also increased their basic '*aṭā*' by 100 *dirhams*.¹²¹ Regarding the Syrian forces, historians like al-Balādhurī and al-Dīnawarī point out that immediately after the accession of the 'Abbāsids, the new authority requested the Syrian forces stationed in Iraq to return immediately to their homes in Syria and

¹¹⁸ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 133.

¹¹⁹ Omar, '*Abbāsiyyāt*', p. 41.

¹²⁰ Abī, *Nathr al-Durar*, vol. 3, p. 80; Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah*, vol. 7, p. 157.

¹²¹ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 426; Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. 3, p. 143; K. al-'Uyūn, p. 200.

promised that they would receive their '*aṭā*' according to the Syrian *Dīwān*.¹²² The same policy was repeated with regard to the Arab forces in Egypt. Al-Kindī, for example, points out that in 133/751 Caliph Abū al-'Abbās ordered the '*aṭā*' to be allotted to the *muqātilah* as well as to their families.¹²³

The reign of the second 'Abbāsīd Caliph, al-Manṣūr, was clearly a turning point with regard to the '*aṭā*' of the tribal forces, as we find no further indication of any '*aṭā*' being given to Arab forces whether in Iraq or Syria. For Iraq the phenomenon can be explained by the fact that al-Manṣūr sought to evacuate Iraq of much of its manpower by transferring men to the frontiers such as those with Armenia, Adharbayjān, and Sind.¹²⁴ Nevertheless, in these difficult frontier regions these Iraqi forces continued to preserve their tribal structure. So, when historians refer to them in the time of Caliph al-Rashīd, they continue to be described as Rabī'ah, Yaman, and Nizār.¹²⁵ In view this, it seems safe to assume that these Iraqi forces must have continued to use the old method of registration based on tribal affiliation and that they were still paid according to the traditional system of '*aṭā*'. As for those who remained in Iraq, it is most likely that they were denied the right to the '*aṭā*' in the

¹²² Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. 3, p. 147; Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, p. 375. "ولما بويع السفاح نودي يا أهل الشام الحقوا بشامكم

فأشهدوا أسماءكم هناك."

¹²³ Kindī, *Wulāt*, p. 122. "وفيها أمر للناس بأعطائهم للمقاتلة والعيال."

¹²⁴ Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 371; Balādhurī, *Fuṭūḥ*, p. 246; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 517; vol. 8, p. 116.

¹²⁵ See e.g. Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, pp. 371, 381, 426.

aftermath of Ibrāhīm b. 'Alī's rebellion in 145/762.¹²⁶ As for the Syrian troops, it is evident from the *Risālah* of Ibn al-Muqaffa' that they were demobilized, apparently after the rebellion of 'Abdallāh b. 'Alī in 136/754, and that they were not only denied the right to the '*aṭā*' but also all sorts of political and economic privileges that they had previously enjoyed.¹²⁷ But breaking up the Syrian army and abolishing its *Dīwān* did not mean that the new authority had no more need of its services. To the contrary, the 'Abbāsīds continued to use Syrian troops in considerable numbers whether on the Syrian frontiers or in other, turbulent Arab provinces such as Egypt and Ifrīqiya. Now, however, their recruitment was not on the basis of their tribes, but according to their cities and districts and, most important, according to the *irtizāq* system. We are told, for example, that in 169/786 when al-Mahdī appointed al-Faḍl b. Ṣālīḥ as governor of Egypt, the latter left for Egypt accompanied by a large army recruited from among the *ahl al-Shām*. The Syrian units in this army are said to have been from Qinnasrīn, Ḥimṣ, Damascus, Jordan, and Palestine.¹²⁸

As for the Arabs in Egypt, we know for certain that they continued to receive their traditional '*aṭā*' until the time of al-Mu'taṣim, who, immediately after his succession to power, ordered the removal of the Arabs from the *Dīwān* and the cessation of their

¹²⁶It should be noted, however, that the cessation of '*aṭā*' payments to the Iraqi people does not mean that the old Umayyad registers (*dawāwīn*) in cities such as Baṣrah and Kūfah were destroyed. To the contrary, they continued to be preserved but without any more names being added or being used to distribute the '*aṭā*'. Instead, they served as genealogical records to trace the tribal descent of individuals. For examples, see Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 129-32; Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. 3, p. 95.

¹²⁷Ibn al-Muqaffa', *Risālah*, pp. 126-7; Sharon, "Reform", p. 127.

¹²⁸Kindī, *Wulāt*, p. 152. See also Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 631.

'*aṭā*'.¹²⁹ Unlike in Iraq and Syria, the 'Abbāsids were able to establish their authority in Egypt without any sort of resistance on the part of the Arabs there. In fact, the different factions of the Arab tribes in the region seem to have played a vital role in frustrating the escape of the last Umayyad Caliph by withdrawing their support, leaving him to his fate.¹³⁰ Until the end of the reign of al-Manṣūr, except for the 'Alid rebellion in Fustāt in 145/763, which did not find any real support among the Arabs there, the political atmosphere between the central government and the Arabs in Egypt was characterized by tranquillity. Thus, it is no surprise to find that the 'Abbāsīd authority in the province increased their '*aṭā*' by ten *dinars* in 137/755.¹³¹

However, this good relationship did not last long, as the Arabs, especially those in the Ḥawf region, started to emerge as a disruptive element from 167/784, during the reign of al-Mahdī and the governorship of Mūsā b. Muṣ'ab. This change of attitude on the part of the Arabs can be attributed mainly to the change in the taxation policy of the central government at this time. From the time of al-Mahdī, the 'Abbāsids sought to extract more taxes from the region either by imposing new taxes on the urban population, as for example on markets (*aswāq*) and animals (*dawāb*), or by

¹²⁹ Kindī, *Wulāt*, p. 217, Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, vol. 1, p. 94. The text in al-Kindī runs as follows "Al-Ma'mūn died...and the people (*al-nās*) formally swore allegiance to Abū Ishāq al-Mu'taṣim [as Caliph]. Al-Mu'taṣim sent a letter to Kaydar (Nāṣr b. 'Abdal, the governor of Egypt) informing him of his accession to power and ordering him to drop what Arabs were on the *Dīwān* and to discontinue their '*aṭā*'."

¹³⁰ Kindī, *Wulāt*, p. 117.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

unjustly increasing the land taxes imposed on the Arab cultivators of the Ḥawf.¹³²

What deepened the rift between the two sides was the fact that, besides the serious uprising of the Arab cultivators, who did not hesitate to join forces with political rivals of the 'Abbāsids such as Dihyah b. Muṣ'ab, the tribal militias, who were raised locally and led by members of the local elite (*wujūh* or *wujahā'*), and who were responsible for keeping order in the province, were not always a tractable element in the hands of the 'Abbāsid governor.¹³³ While they rioted dangerously whenever their pay fell into arrears, they were less impressive when they were asked to face the rebellions of their brothers among the Arabs of the Ḥawf, who had with them many common links and interests.¹³⁴ Moreover, at most times the influence and power of the local militias and their commanders seem to have exceeded those of the 'Abbāsid governor and sometimes even of the 'Abbāsid Caliphs, especially when

¹³²*Ibid.*, p. 148; Basawī, *al-Ma'rifah*, vol. 1, p. 157. The settlement of the Arabs in the delta banks goes back to Umayyad times, when, as historical sources indicate, Arab tribes such as Lakhm and Jadhām of Yemen settled in the western side. Meanwhile, with regard to the Qaysī tribes, who played a vital role in resisting the 'Abbāsid authority in the province, historians such as al-Kindī (*Wulāt*, pp. 98-9) and al-Maqrīzī, (*Khīṭaṭ*, vol. 1, p. 80) indicate that in 109/728 'Abdallāh b. Ḥabāb, the governor of Egypt during the reign of Caliph Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik, transferred 400 Qaysī families from Syria to the eastern side of the delta, especially in the rural district of Bulbays, where he asked them to cultivate the land. However, it seems that the transformation of these Qaysī tribes from the bedouin mode of life to an agricultural one was not completed until the early years of 'Abbāsid rule. This may explain why, after transferring them to Egypt, the Umayyad authority continued to pay their '*aṭā'*' according to the Egyptian *Dīwān*. Also, until the end of the Umayyad rule, there is no indication that the Umayyads taxed the Arabs of the Ḥawf.

¹³³Until the death of Caliph Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik in 125/743, the Umayyads relied mainly on the Syrian forces stationed in Egypt to maintain order. After the death of Hishām, however, the new Caliph, al-Walīd b. Yazīd, instructed Ḥafṣ b. al-Walīd, the governor of Egypt, to send all the Syrians in the region back to their original districts (*ajnād*) in Syria. From that time the duty of maintaining order in the province fell upon the local Arabs who had settled there since the time of its conquest. While this led to the rise in power of the local *wujūh* in the province, it led on the other hand to the decline of the Umayyads' authority, to the degree that they were no longer able to affirm their political control except by sending their Syrian troops from time to time. Kindī, *Wulāt*, pp. 105-12.

¹³⁴Kennedy, "Central Government", pp. 34-5. For examples, see Kindī, *Wulāt*, pp. 149, 166.

it came to appointing officials in the province, including the governor himself.¹³⁵ In addition, during the period between the outset of the civil war in 194/810 and the appointment of 'Abdallāh b. Ṭāhir in 211/826 as governor of Egypt, the central government effectively lost control over the province. It was then that these tribal militias and their *wujūh* entered the political struggle to establish their own authority far away from Baghdad.¹³⁶ Consequentially, all the problems that the Arab militias created helped persuade the 'Abbāsids finally to decide to put an end to the role of the Arabs in the military affairs of the province. As for the reasons why the 'Abbāsids proved unable to achieve this aim before the time of al-Mu'taṣim, they may be summarized under two main heads. First, after the reign of al-Mahdī, the central government seems to have lacked sufficient manpower to carry out the duties both of defending the frontiers of the state and, at the same time, of suppressing the serious uprising of the Arabs in Egypt, which required their permanent presence there.¹³⁷ We may add to this the fact that for many years after the civil war, the 'Abbāsids effectively lost control over their standing army in Baghdad and al-Ma'mūn did not have either the money or the confidence to use the Syrian tribal forces against the Arabs of Egypt. The second reason was that Egypt was the next most important source of revenue for the central government after Iraq.¹³⁸ Therefore, the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs were cautious not to irritate the leaders of the local militias, which eventually would lead to the complete separation of the province, as had

¹³⁵ Kindī, *Wulāt*, pp. 180, 186; Kennedy, "Central Government," pp. 33-8.

¹³⁶ Kennedy, "Central Government," p. 37.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

already happened with other areas in Ifrīqiya, and consequent loss of this important source of revenue. Circumstances, however, changed with the coming of al-Mu'taṣim to power. With a large Turkish fighting force whose loyalty was in no doubt, al-Mu'taṣim was in a better position to remove the tribal forces and substitute his new forces, through whom he could enforce his will in the region.¹³⁹

As in Umayyad times, the traditional '*aṭā*' of the Arab tribal forces in provinces such as Egypt continued to be paid annually during the first century of 'Abbāsid rule.¹⁴⁰

Yet, it seems that its due payment date was no longer in the month of Muḥarram according to the Arab calendar, but mainly connected to the time when the land taxes could be levied. Furthermore, there is no indication that the provincial forces received in addition to their cash allowance any payment in foodstuffs during 'Abbāsid times, except in unusual circumstances. The most common of these circumstances was when the troops demanded the whole of their salaries to be issued before they were actually due. Thus, the provincial authority found itself unable to pay their full salaries in cash. An example of this occurred in 193/809 when the Arab tribal militia in Egypt exploited the news of the death of Caliph al-Rashīd and the accession of al-Amīn to power by mutinying and demanding their pay in advance.¹⁴¹ Faced with this situation, the governor of Egypt, al-Ḥasan b. al-

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ Bosworth, "Master", p. 62.

¹⁴⁰ Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 439.

¹⁴¹ Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd died on Saturday the 3rd Jumādā II, AH 193 (= 24th March, AD 809). From this date there were still at least three months before the harvesting of the crops began, so that the land tax could be levied, and so on the distribution of the pay of the troops.

Takhtākh, found himself compelled to pay their 'aṭā' in full: one third in cash, one third in linen (*bazz*), and one third in wheat.¹⁴²

2.2.3 The Conditions of Enlistment in the *Dīwān*

Muslim jurists, such as the Abū Yūsuf (d. 182/ 798) and Chief Qādī Māwardī (d. 458/1058), drew up five qualifying conditions needing to be fulfilled before one could become eligible for enrolment in the *Dīwān al-Jund* and receive a regular allowance from the Treasury. These conditions were Freedom from disability and illness, being a Muslim, freedom, courage, and, finally, maturity.¹⁴³ Although it is difficult to determine to what extent the early 'Abbāsīd military institution was committed to all these principles as conditions of entry to its service, there are some scattered signs which do indeed seem to indicate that certain restrictions were in force to safeguard entrance to military service. 'Akhbār al-'Abbās, for example, notes a very interesting directive (*waṣīyyah*) issued by the 'Abbāsīd Imam, Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad, to his propagandists (*du'āh*) in Khurāsān. The account relates that the Imam instructed his *du'āh* not to invite into the ranks of the movement ten types of people: anyone extremely tall, anyone dwarfish, anyone with short curly hair (most probably meaning black slaves), anyone, albinotic, anyone defective in the right eye, anyone with unnatural bodily superfluities, anyone with unnatural bodily deficiencies, anyone effeminate, any woman with masculine characteristics, or

¹⁴² Kindī, *Wulāi*, p. 172: "وفي ولايته (أين التناخ) قدم عليه ابن خبيل بنعي الرشيد. وأستخلف محمد بن هارون، فثار الجند بمصر، فأعطاهم ابن التناخ العطاء كاملاً: ثلثاً عيناً، وثلثاً يراً، وثلثاً قمحاً."

¹⁴³ Māwardī, *Aḥkām*, pp. 204, 302; Farrā', *Aḥkām*, pp. 224-5; Abū Yūsuf, *Kharāj*, p.175.

anyone with a yellowish complexion for no obvious reason.¹⁴⁴ From this *waṣīyyah* one may conclude that those sorts of people were not amongst those who joined the revolution and were later eligible to be enlisted in the Khurāsānīs' *Dīwān*. However, in later times the 'Abbāsids seem to have paid less regard to these physical defects that formerly rendered some unsuitable for military service, especially when concerning themselves with the commanders of the army. Thus, we find, for example, that Tāhir b. al-Ḥusayn, al-Mu'mūn's commander-in-chief during the civil war, was actually a one-eyed person with a repugnant face.¹⁴⁵

Regarding the condition of being a Muslim, it seems that this condition remained a vital condition for enlisting men in the *Dīwān*. According to Islamic law (*Sharī'ah*), non-Muslims cannot serve in Muslim armies.¹⁴⁶ Nevertheless, in extreme emergencies they might be employed, but still they had no right to be enlisted in the *Dīwān* or to receive regular pay from the Treasury.¹⁴⁷ Evidence that the 'Abbāsids stuck to this condition is found in Balādhurī's comment that, besides accepting the authority of the Caliph, embracing Islam was the next condition that Caliph al-

¹⁴⁴ "وقال إبراهيم لدعاته الذين وجههم إلى خرا سان: لا تدعوا إلى طاعتنا عشرة أصناف من الناس: الطويل الممدد، والقصير المردد، والجعد القطط، والأمهق المغرب، والأعور بعين اليمين، والزائد والناقص في الحلقة، والمتشبه من الرجال بالنساء ومن النساء بالرجال، ولأصفر لونه من غير علة."

Akhbār, p. 387. Without Islamic juristic foundation, the only reasoning which might possibly lie behind this *waṣīyyah* is that the 'Abbāsids did not wish their movement to be associated with "unworthy people", inviting their enemy to describe the followers of the movement as nothing but the dregs of society. For some insight into the propaganda war between the 'Abbāsīd propagandists and the Umayyad supporters, see Omar, *The 'Abbāsīd Caliphate*, pp. 98-9.

¹⁴⁵ Jahshiyārī, *Wuzarā'*, p. 291; *Uyūn*, p. 342. "وكان أعور كربة الوجه مشعراً." Also, Ṭabarī (*Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 492, 577) indicates that Ja'far b. Ḥanẓalah al-Baḥrānī, a very well-known military commander in the time of Marwān and later one of the 'Abbāsīds' commanders, suffered from a skin disease (*Barṣṣ*)

¹⁴⁶ Qur'ān, 3: 28; 4: 139; 5: 51-59; 58:14; 60:1-3; Māwardī, *Aḥkām*, p. 204.

¹⁴⁷ Abū Yūsuf, *Awzā'ī*, pp. 39-40; Farrā', *Aḥkām*, p. 151.

Ma'mūn set before the people of Mā warā' al-Nahr (Transoxania) for them to be eligible to enter the *Dīwān* and thus receive stipends.¹⁴⁸

Regarding the freedom principle in personal status, although slaves participated as fighters in the Muslim armies as early as the battle of Badr in 2/624 and continued occasionally to do so throughout the Umayyad rule, their rights never amounted to those of free-born men or *mawālī*. Instead, they entered the war on the capacity of their masters and, therefore, they were not entitled to be enrolled in the *Dīwān* or to receive the '*atā*'.¹⁴⁹ Nevertheless, it seems that this qualifying principle lost its value with the introduction of so-called Turkish slaves into the military institution in the time of Caliph al-Ma'mūn and afterward. One of the clearest indications proving that many of al-Mu'taṣim's Turkish troops entered the army while still under enslavement was their inability to divorce the slave women who had been assigned to marry them,¹⁵⁰ which blatantly contravenes the basic right of a free person in

¹⁴⁸Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 528-9. Although there is no mention of the process of Turkish troops' conversion to Islam in the time of al-Mu'taṣim, sources clearly imply that they were Muslims. It is reported, for instance, that Ashnās and other Turkish commanders were assigned the task of building mosques in Sāmarrā'. Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 29. Referring to the Mamlūks' experience, Ayalon points out that "young children from nomad tribes were brought as slaves from non-Muslim areas into the Muslim world; they were converted to Islam, given a fanatical orthodox education and trained in the finest methods of combat." Ayalon, "The Muslim City", p. 311.

¹⁴⁹Ibn Sallām, *Amwāl*, pp. 255-6. For some examples of the participation of slaves in warfare in the time of the Prophet, the Orthodox Caliphs, and the Umayyads, see Pipes, *Slave*, pp. 108-120. However, one should be careful to distinguish between the slave who was still under enslavement and the one who was manumitted and became a *mawālī* as the latter, legally, had the same rights in the army as the pure freeman (*salīb*). Thus, the slaves who fought with the Prophet and later were manumitted were entitled to be enrolled in the *Dīwān* and receive the '*atā*' in the time of Caliph 'Umar I. Ibn Sallām, *Amwāl*, p. 255. For more details on this subject, see, Forand, "The Relation of the Slave and the Client to the Master or Patron in Medieval Islam", *IJMES*, vol. 2, (1971), pp. 59-66.

¹⁵⁰Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 29.

Islam.¹⁵¹ Commenting on this condition, Khwārazmī points out that freedom was a fundamental demand when the Arabs were the dominant element in the army, yet it lost its significance and value with the introduction of non-Arabs on a large scale.¹⁵²

The courage condition seems to have been a fair demand for those who wished to engage in military service in the time of the 'Abbāsids, since service in the army in 'Abbāsid times was an optional choice and not an obligatory duty (*farḍ 'ayn*), as it had been in the time of the Prophet and the Orthodox Caliphs or for those who received pensions during the Umayyad Caliphate.¹⁵³ Thus, it could be expected that under the 'Abbāsids those who possessed less than average courage or simply disliked military life for any reason would certainly turn to the civil services instead. Finally, it is worth remembering that courage is one of those traits that can hardly be tested in a fighter outside the battlefield and that its degree can easily vary from one battle to another according the circumstances of each one. In fact, the 'Abbāsid army was not always crowned with victories. To the contrary, on many occasions the 'Abbāsid standing forces suffered humiliating defeats at the hands of rebel forces, who were often less numerous and prepared. In fact, the extent of humiliation on some occasions reached the point where prominent leaders such as Ḥumayd b. Qaṭṭabah offered the Khārijite rebel forces immense monetary tributes to stop the

¹⁵¹ Abū Yūsuf, *Awzā'ī*, p. 68.

¹⁵² Khwārazmī, *Mafāiḥ*, p. 64.

¹⁵³ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 3, pp. 107, 111, 478; vol. 4, pp. 245, 261; vol. 5, pp. 193, 222; vol. 6, pp. 204, 207; Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, vol. 2, p. 310.

fighting and allow him and his forces to return home safely.¹⁵⁴ Moreover, in a campaign against the Byzantines in 164/781, the 'Abbāsīd commander, 'Abd al-Kabīr b. 'Abd al-Ḥumayd, is reported to have lost heart before he even met the enemy forces and to have returned home without engaging with them. This so enraged Caliph al-Mahdī that he wanted at first to execute him.¹⁵⁵

Concerning maturity, there is no information about the minimum age at which the early 'Abbāsīds enlisted people in the *Dīwān*. However, it seems that the age of fifteen, which was approved by the Prophet and applied by the Orthodox Caliphs and the Umayyads,¹⁵⁶ was the same age limit also applied by the 'Abbāsīds. This age, besides being the age of assuming religious responsibility according to the Islamic *Sharī'ah*, is also the age when it is expected that the mental capability of young recruits would have ripened, enabling them quickly to grasp the arts of war and making them readily amenable to taking orders from their superiors without much questioning.

¹⁵⁴ Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 114; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 496; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 79.

¹⁵⁵ After intercession was made for the commander, al-Mahdī agreed only to confiscate all his fortune and imprison him in the Muṭbaq. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 150; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 246; Ibn Khayyāt, *Tārīkh*, p. 356; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 146; Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 245. Seemingly, the 'Abbāsīd leaders recognized the adverse psychological effects and fear that used to affect the soldiers as a result of being defeated in the battlefield. Therefore, some of the 'Abbāsīd commanders were very cautious not to use in the main formation of their armies those soldiers who had been defeated by the same enemy now being faced. Instead, those soldiers would be left at the rear of the army as supernumerary reinforcements as well as to increase the size of the army in the eyes of the enemy. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 30; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 190; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 113.

¹⁵⁶ Abū Yūsuf, *Kharāj*, p. 175; Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 5, p. 351.

2.2.4 Rates of Pay of the 'Abbāsīd Troops

Neither the standards promulgated by Caliph 'Umar nor the conditions applied by the Umayyads to determine the rate of warriors' allowances were the same as those used in 'Abbāsīd times. Instead, the 'Abbāsīds seem to have referred to two main factors- military division and location- in assessing pay rates. With regard to military division, soldiers belonged either to the cavalry or to the infantry. Besides being the most effective force in the army upon whom rested the final result of battle, the cavalry were also fully responsible for taking care of their own horses, so that their pay had to include allowances to cover all the expenses needed for such care.¹⁵⁷ For that reason, the 'Abbāsīd cavalymen, for most of the time, received double the amount that the infantrymen used to receive.¹⁵⁸ Salary levels were also affected by the place in which the soldiers were stationed, so that the troops who were stationed in the frontier towns, where they were in constant danger, received higher allowances and more privileges than their colleagues in the central armies did.

2.2.4.1 The Pay of the Standing Army in Baghdad

It seems that the rate of payments made to the regular troops, whose names were formally enrolled in the *Dīwān* and who were assigned regular allowances (*arzāq*) was subject to considerable fluctuation throughout the first century of 'Abbāsīd rule. The first reference to troops' pay relates to Dhū al-Qa'dah 129/747, when Kāmil b.

¹⁵⁷ Abū Yūsuf, *Kharāj*, p. 47. Indication that the cavalry were responsible for paying the expenses incurred by caring for their horses, including the provision of fodder, is found in Ibn al-Muqaffa' (*Risālah*, p. 124), who suggests that part of the *rizq* should be given as food and some as a fodder.

¹⁵⁸ Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 534, 550.

Muẓaffar drew up the first register in Mākhuwān village. In it he listed 7,000 men, mostly infantry and non-professionals, and “he paid them three *dirhams* each and later four *dirhams*.”¹⁵⁹ However, by attracting the Arab professional forces to their side, the revolutionary leaders seem to have been compelled to offer these forces who joined them and who were previously listed in the Umayyads’ *Dīwān*, the same amount of money that they used to receive while they were on the Umayyads’ side.¹⁶⁰ Thus, we find that some of the warriors who were in the revolutionary army advancing westward under Qaḥṭabah received 60, 80, and others 100 *dirhams*.¹⁶¹

According to *Akhbār*, the first *rizq* to be paid to the ‘Abbāsīd forces from the Treasury of the ‘Abbāsīd dynasty came on the 11 Muḥarram 132/ 30 Dec 749 in Kūfah.¹⁶² With a Treasury full of money, the victors were determined to show their supporters as well as others that they were better than their predecessors and there was no better way to express this than to reward them fiscally.¹⁶³ Thus, in his first speech to the army commanders and their soldiers in Kūfah, Abū Salamah al-Khallāl announced, “The people of the cursed house [the Umayyads] used to allot 300 *dirhams* a year for each warrior. I therefore shall make the *rizq* 80 *dirhams* a month for each.”¹⁶⁴ This rate of *rizq*, however, seems at first not to have included all the

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 367.

¹⁶⁰ *Akhbār*, p. 344.

¹⁶¹ Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. 3, p. 135; Sharon, *Revolt*, p. 102.

¹⁶² *Akhbār*, pp. 374-7.

¹⁶³ “تولى أبو العباس السفاح وبيوت الأموال ممثلة”. *Akhbār*, p. 377.

¹⁶⁴ *Akhbār*, p. 376.

warriors, since, a few months later, the first Caliph granted to those who had witnessed the battle of Zāb (on the 11 Jumāda II 132/26 February 750) 500 *dirhams* as a premium and raised their *rizq* to 80 *dirhams*.¹⁶⁵ However, it was not long before the first Caliph found himself unable to continue paying his troops at this high rate. This was on account of the steep decline of the tax yield coming from the provinces to the central Treasury, either because some provinces, like Khurāsān under Abū Muslim, stopped sending the taxes, or because of the undesirable consequences of the Caliph's own taxation policy.¹⁶⁶ To cope with this problem the Caliph resorted to two solutions: first, reducing the number of soldiers listed in the *Dīwān*, and, second, reducing the payments of the troops from 80 to 60 *dirhams* in 135/753.¹⁶⁷

Although the reign of the second Caliph, al-Manṣūr, started with an initial increase in soldiers' pay of 80 *dirhams* per month,¹⁶⁸ the pay level soon dropped dramatically to as little as 20 *dirhams* for each infantryman.¹⁶⁹ There were two principal causes for this reduction. First, there was improvement in the economic position of the

¹⁶⁵Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 435. The chroniclers also narrate that at the outset of his reign Abū al-'Abbās promised the Kūfans that he would raise their '*aṭā*' by 100 *dirhams* each. However, it seems that this increase was a once only gesture of appreciation limited to the Kūfans. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 426; Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. 3, p. 143.

¹⁶⁶It seems that one of the causes of the government's economic decline was the decreasing amount coming from the poll tax (*jizyah*). In this regard Severus b. al-Muqaffa' points out that the first 'Abbāsīd Caliph, Abū al-'Abbās, declared that everyone who became of his (i.e. the Caliph's) faith and prayed as he prayed would be exempted from paying the *jizyah*. Therefore, because of the heavy taxation imposed upon them, many of the wealthy and poor denied the faith of Christ. Severus b. al-Muqaffa', *History of the Patriarch*, pp. 189-90 (cited from Shākir, *Banū al-'Abbās*, vol. 2, p. 579).

¹⁶⁷Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. 3, p. 107.

¹⁶⁸"وكان أبو العباس يخط الأرزاق في سنة خمس وثلاثين إلى ستين ستين فصيرها أبو جعفر ثمانين ثمانين." Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. 3, p. 107.

¹⁶⁹Iṣfahānī (*Aghānī*, vol. 10, p. 106) gives an oral report of one of al-Manṣūr's soldiers saying, "I swear by Allah that I am a foot soldier and my *rizq* from Caliph al-Manṣūr is 20 *dirhams* a month."

(footnote continued)

central government, which came as a consequence of the wide and deep administrative reforms, especially in the mechanism of tax collection and in monetary policy.¹⁷⁰ This economic boom led to a reduction in the price of goods in the markets, which in turn was reflected in the lowering of people's wages in all avenues of employment including the army.¹⁷¹ The second reason for the reduction in army pay may be attributed to the practical ideology of the Caliph himself. Al-Manṣūr seems to have realized that giving the troops more than they actually needed was the shortest way of corrupting the warriors and weakening their martial strength. Therefore, the best way to control the soldiers and ensure their loyalty was to attach them fiscally to their provider and make them always dependent on him. This was pithily expressed by al-Manṣūr when he said one day to a group of his commanders, "The bedou (*a'rābī*) was right when he said, 'Starve your dog and it will follow you about.'"¹⁷² However, in an attempt to prevent any sort of complaint by the people as well as the army, Caliph al-Manṣūr sought to cast a religious halo over his fiscal

".... أنا والله راجل، ورزقي من أبي جعفر المنصور عشرون درهما في الشهر."

¹⁷⁰ Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 576. For more information on al-Manṣūr's economics reform, see Shākir, *Banū al-'Abbās*, vol. 1, pp. 574-90.

¹⁷¹ Jahshiyārī (*Wuzarā'*, p. 117) states plainly that prices fell in the time of Caliph al-Manṣūr. For further references to prices and wages in the time of al-Manṣūr, see Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh*, vol. 1, pp. 43, 70; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 655; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 104.

policy. This is well illustrated in his address to the people on the day of 'Arafah¹⁷³ in 158/775, saying:

I am only the authority of God in his earth, and I govern you through His guidance and His direction to what is right. I am His treasurer in charge of the *fay'*, and I work according to His will and divide it according to His wish and give it with His permission. God has appointed me over it as a lock; if He wants to open me for your salaries and divide your *fay'* and allowances, He will do so and if He wants to close me up, He will close me up.¹⁷⁴

Although the troops' salaries witnessed some increase throughout the reigns of al-Mahdī and al-Rashīd,¹⁷⁵ they returned again to the rate of the 80 *dirhams* during the period of the civil war between the two brothers. Al-Ṭabarī recounts that when the war started, al-Amīn assigned 'Īsā b. Māhān to command 50,000 soldiers from among the people of Baghdad, that he handed over to him the army registers, and that he asked him "to choose those who pleased him and raise the salaries of

¹⁷²"أجمع كلبك يبعك". Ibn al-Azraq, *Badā'ī*, vol. 1, p. 199. With a strong economy and a Treasury full of money, we cannot find any other reason than this to explain the delay in the troops' pay which happened in the time of Caliph al-Manṣūr, as noted by Ibn al-Muqaffa' (*Risālah*, p.124). Al-Manṣūr also recognized that the strength of the dynasty and the loyalty of the army were closely connected to the availability of money in the central Treasury. Therefore, in his *waṣīyah* to his son al-Mahdī, he is able to declare, "For you I have gathered in it such wealth that, if the *kharāj* (taxes) were to be interrupted for ten years, you would have enough for the salaries of the army, the expenses and allowances of the children, and the needs of the frontiers. So keep it and you will not cease to be powerful as long as your Treasury remains full." Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 103 (English tr. quoted from Kennedy, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 29, p. 150). Further, Jahshiyārī (*Wuzarā'*, p. 158), Azdī (*Tārīkh*, p. 230), and Khaṭīb (*Tārīkh*, vol. 5, p. 393) all state that al-Manṣūr left after his death more than 960 million *dirhams* in the central Treasury.

¹⁷³The 9 Dhū al-Ḥijjah (the tenth month of the Islamic calendar).

¹⁷⁴Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 89; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 130 (English tr. quoted from Kennedy, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 29, p. 131).

¹⁷⁵Although chronicles indicate that there was a rise in the troops' pay during the reigns of al-Mahdī and al-Rashīd, they do not specify the actual rate of this increase. For example, Jahshiyārī (*Wuzarā'*, p. 191) narrates that in the reign of al-Rashīd, al-Faḍl b. Yaḥyā increased the pay of the troops and their commanders in Khurāsān. "وأحرق دقاتر البقايا , وزاد الجند والقواد."

whomever he wished to 80 [*dirhams*].”¹⁷⁶ This rate of pay is reconfirmed by al-Ṭabarī when he mentions that after the death of ‘Īsā and the defeat of his army at the hands of Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn, the soldiers in Baghdad exploited the dire need of al-Amīn for manpower and mutinied, demanding that the Caliph increase their salaries. Thus, when the news reached al-Amīn, he “ordered four months of their salaries to be paid in advance and raised the salaries of those who received less to 80 *dirhams*.”¹⁷⁷ This raise of pay for al-Amīn’s troops played an effective role in inducing 5,000 men of Ṭāhir’s warriors to withdraw and join the other side, where they were enlisted in the *Dīwān* and offered 80 *dirhams* as well.¹⁷⁸ To stem the ebbing tide of troops in his army as well as to induce those who felt dissatisfied with al-Amīn to come and join him, Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn found himself with no other choice but to raise the salaries of his troops to 80 *dirhams*.¹⁷⁹

With the end of the civil war, the troops’ salaries started to decline gradually until they reached, in 201/816, 40 *dirhams* for the cavalry and 20 for the infantry.¹⁸⁰ Nevertheless, between the years 202/818 and 203/819, under unusual circumstances the pay of the Baghdadi troops in particular witnessed some increase. This was owing to al-Ma’mūn’s sudden and peculiar decision, in 201/817, to designate ‘Alī b.

¹⁷⁶Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 405; see also Dīnawarī, *Akḥbār*, p. 396; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 372.

¹⁷⁷Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 412.

¹⁷⁸According to al-Ṭabarī (*Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 442), 5,000 men joined al-Amīn.

¹⁷⁹Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 443.

Mūsā b. Ja'far as his heir to the throne. This decision led to wide spread outrage and dissatisfaction among the commanders of the army in Baghdad, who decided to overthrow al-Ma'mūn and proclaim Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī as the new Caliph in his place. As a gesture of appreciation and to secure their support, Ibrāhīm promised the troops in Baghdad a salary of 50 *dirhams*. Nevertheless, his failure to fulfil his promise led the people of Baghdad, especially after they received a promise from Ḥumayd, one of al-Ma'mūn's commanders, that he would pay them 50 *dirhams*, to throw off their allegiance to Ibrāhīm and recall al-Ma'mūn as the Caliph. It is said, however, that when Ḥumayd went to review the army of Baghdadi troops and pay out the 50 *dirhams* that he had promised them, the troops asked him to reduce the sum by ten *dirhams* and instead to pay them 40 *dirhams* each. This gesture had its origin in their previous disappointment with 'Alī b. Hishām, who, having offered them 50 *dirhams*, tricked them by paying nothing. Ḥumayd, however, answered them munificently by saying, "No, but instead I shall increase your pay and give you each 60 *dirhams*."¹⁸¹

The decline of the troops' pay after the end of the civil war could well be attributed to two important factors. First, there was the sharp decline of the revenue flowing into the central Treasury, so that there was a shortfall of funds to the tune of 100

¹⁸⁰These rates of pay are said to have been paid by 'Isā b. Muḥammad b. Abī Khālīd to the 125,000 men who were under his command and represented most of the troops in Baghdad (*Ahl Baghdād*). Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 550; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 430.

¹⁸¹Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 571; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 449.

million *dirhams* in 204/820.¹⁸² This was due, first, to the devastating economic impact of the long years of civil war and the temporary separation of many key provinces, like Syria, Egypt, Sind, and Ifrīqiya, from the direct control of the central government, which meant that no taxes at all could be collected from them, and, second, to al-Ma'mūn's own taxation policy as he reduced the amount of tax due from other areas such as the Sawād and al-Rayy.¹⁸³ It can also be related to the increased reliance on non-Arab recruits, especially from Transoxania and inner Asia, who seem to have been more content with lower salaries than were the people of Baghdad.¹⁸⁴

Summary of the Rates of the Troops' Pay During the First Century of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate

<i>Year</i>	<i>Caliph</i>	<i>Pay</i>
129/747	Early days of the 'Abbāsid revolt	From 3-4 <i>dirhams</i>
130/748	The revolutionary troops marching toward Iraq (Qaṭṭabah's army)	From 60-100 <i>dirhams</i>
132/750	'Abū al-'Abbās	80 <i>dirhams</i>
135/753	'Abū al-'Abbās	60 <i>dirhams</i>
136/754	Al-Manṣūr	80 <i>dirhams</i>
After 136/754	Al-Manṣūr	20 <i>dirhams</i> to infantry / 40 <i>dirhams</i> to cavalry
194/810	Al-Amīn (during the civil war)	80 <i>dirhams</i>

¹⁸²This figure can be calculated by comparing the *kharāj* list of Qudāmah (*Kharāj*, p. 167), relating to the year 204/820, with that of al-Jahshiyārī (*Wuzarā'*, p. 288), which goes back to the reign of al-Rashīd (170-193/786-809).

¹⁸³It is reported that al-Ma'mūn reduced the share of the harvest payable as tax by the cultivators in the Sawād from one half to two fifths. He also reduced the sum of tax payable by al-Rayy by the amount of two million *dirhams*. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 568, 576; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 393; Ibn al-Ṭīqṭaqā, *al-Fakhrī*, p. 260; Ibn al-Azraq, *Badā'i'*, vol. 2, p. 70. On some aspects of al-Ma'mūn's taxation policy, see M. Shamsuddin, "Some Aspects of Revenue Administration under the Early 'Abbāsids with Reference to al-Mutawakkil", *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Soc.* vol. 14 (1966), pp. 172-9.

¹⁸⁴Sharon, "Reform", p.138; Ayalon, "Remarks", p. 48.

198/814	Al-Ma'mūn	80 <i>dirhams</i>
201/817	Al-Ma'mūn	20 <i>dirhams</i> infantry/ 40 <i>dirhams</i> cavalry
202/818	Al-Ma'mūn	60 <i>dirhams</i>
223/838	Al-Mu'taṣim	2 <i>dinars</i> ¹⁸⁵

Table 2.2: Summary of the Rates of the Troops' Pay During the First Century of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate

2.2.4.2 The Pay of the Troops in the Frontier Regions

In order to ensure enough manpower in the frontier towns, which constituted the first defensive lines of the state, the 'Abbāsids gave special privileges to the troops stationed there. In addition to grants of lands and subsidies, the warriors received higher salaries than their partners in the central army. After rebuilding Malaṭyah on the Byzantine frontiers, Caliph al-Manṣūr settled there 4,000 warriors from the Jazīrah province and increased the pay of each one by ten *dinars* over and above his normal salary.¹⁸⁶ It is also reported that al-Mahdī awarded ten *dinars* to each of the 500 soldiers who were stationed in Maṣṣīṣah.¹⁸⁷ In 169/786, after building the fortress of Ḥadath, Caliph al-Hādī awarded salaries of 40 *dinars* to each of the 6,000 warriors who were brought from Syria, Jazīrah, Khurāsān, and other frontier cities and settled there.¹⁸⁸ Caliph al-Rashīd supplemented by ten *dinars* the salaries of each of the 5,000 troops who were settled in the frontier town of Ṭarsūs in 172/789.¹⁸⁹ In 218/833, Caliph al-Ma'mūn is said to have awarded allocations of 100 *dirhams* for

¹⁸⁵ Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, p. 476.

¹⁸⁶ Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 223.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 200-1.

each cavalryman and 40 *dirhams* for each infantryman who were dispatched from Damascus, Ḥimṣ, Jordan, Filasṭīn, Jazīrah, and Egypt to encamp in the frontier city of Ṭuwānah.¹⁹⁰

Although we have little evidence of the actual salaries that the army commanders (*quwwād*) used to receive, it seems only fair to assume that they received more than their soldiers did. Moreover, we know for sure that in the early days of the 'Abbāsids' rule certain aspects were taken into consideration while assessing their salaries. Among these were seniority and service to the 'Abbāsīd *da'wah*. *Akhbār* indicates that when Abū Salamah al-Khallāl distributed the first payments among the Khurāsānī warriors in Kūfah in 132/750, he "allotted the distinguished people (*al-khawāṣṣ*), the prominent commanders (*kubarā' al-quwwād*), and the prominent *nūqaba'* [leaders of the 'Abbāsīd partisans in Khurāsān] along with others, between 1,000 and 2,000 [*dirhams*], while he gave those of lower status between 100 and 1,000 [*dirhams*]."¹⁹¹

2.2.4.3 Additional Fiscal Sources for the 'Abbāsīd Troops

Besides their regular pay allowance, the 'Abbāsīd forces used also to receive sometimes a special fiscal subsidy best known as *ma'ūnah*. In the frontier town of

¹⁹⁰Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 631; Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 412.

¹⁹¹"أجرى للخواص وكبراء القواد وأهل الغناء من النقباء وغيرهم ما بين ألف إلى ألفين وخص من دولهم ما بين مائة إلى ألف." *Akhbār*, p. 376. Another indication relates to the time of Caliph al-Ma'mūn, when, as sources report, the salary of al-Rayyān b. al-Ṣilt, one of al-Ma'mūn's commanders, was 10,000 *dirhams* per month. Jahshiyārī, *Aqsām Ḍā'i'ah*, p. 34; Tanūkhī, *al-Faraj*, vol. 2, p. 204.

Malatyah, after he quartered 4,000 men there, Caliph al-Manṣūr is said to have given each one of them 100 *dinars* as a *ma'ūnah*.¹⁹² This type of subsidy or extraordinary allowance is also indicated amongst the 'Abbāsid troops in Baghdad. In 162/779, al-Mahdī gave 1,000 *dirhams* as a *ma'ūnah* to each of the 1,000 soldiers he had sent as reinforcements to deal with the rebellion of 'Abd al-Sallām al-Yashkrī in Jazīrah province.¹⁹³ According to Ibn Abī Ḥadīd, the *ma'ūnah* "is a small sum of money given to the soldier in order to restore his arms and refresh his beast, and this sum of money is not part of his regular allowance (*rizq*)."¹⁹⁴

In addition to the regular payments, the plunder (*ghanā'im*, sing. *ghanīmah*) taken from enemies represented another fiscal source for the warriors as well as for the central Treasury. In contrast to the *fay'*, the *ghanā'im* consisted of all portable objects that might be taken from non-Muslims on the battlefield, including arms, money, merchandise, cattle, and prisoners.¹⁹⁵ According to Muslim jurists, one fifth (*khums*) of the *ghanā'im* was to be divided into three parts. One part, which is God's and the Prophet's portion, goes to the State Treasury and is to be spent for the general welfare of the Muslim *ummah* according to the decision of the Caliph. A second part goes to the near kinsmen of the Prophet and, theoretically, the Caliph has

¹⁹²Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 223.

¹⁹³Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 142.

¹⁹⁴Ibn Abī Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah*, vol. 10, p. 71.

no authority over it. The last part also goes to the State Treasury, to be spent on charitable purposes such as for orphans, the poor, and wayfarers. The remaining four fifths of the *khums* should be divided amongst the men who took active part in the battle.¹⁹⁶

In reality, however, the application of these principles was somewhat different. It seems that one of the problems that the early 'Abbāsīds inherited from their predecessors was that of disagreement between the ruling authority and the army over booty. Nonetheless, in 'Abbāsīd times the disagreement was much augmented as it took two dimensions. First, with regard to the booty taken from non-Muslim foes, in contrast to what used to happen in Umayyad times when the authority always tried to obtain more than its legal share from the booty, in 'Abbāsīd times it was the army who endeavoured to acquire all the booty including the one fifth which was normally sent to the Caliph.¹⁹⁷ The second area of dispute, which was much more serious, concerned the booty acquired from an enemy who had previously been part

¹⁹⁵From the Muslim jurists' point of view, the booty was only the property taken from non-Muslims in warfare. However, in cases of war between Muslims, the property of Muslims cannot be considered as booty and must be returned to its rightful owners. Also, prisoners must not be kept after the end of the war. However, in reality the case was somewhat different. On this issue, see, Farrā', *Aḥkām*, pp. 55-6; Māwardī, *Aḥkām*, pp. 58-60; M. Khadduri, *War and Peace in the Law of Islam* (Baltimore, 1955).

¹⁹⁶Ibn Sallām, *Amwāl*, p. 140; Māwardī, *Aḥkām*, pp. 139-41; Farrā', *Aḥkām*, pp. 141-52; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 4, pp. 22-3, 29.

of the regime. While the 'Abbāsīd authority viewed this as part of government property, all of which should be returned to the central Treasury, the army commanders resisted this and looked on it as pure *ghanā'im*, in which case the government should only take the one fifth.¹⁹⁸

The booty was divided among the soldiers according to a system of shares (*ashum*, sing. *sahm*). Accordingly, the infantryman received one share while the cavalryman received two: one for himself and the other for his horse.¹⁹⁹ Soldiers who rode camels, donkeys, mules, or elephants received the same share as the infantry and were not treated like the cavalry.²⁰⁰

Apart from the regular allowance and *ghanā'im*, the commanders of the army as well as their soldiers also used to receive grants (*ṣilāt*). These grants were usually

¹⁹⁷The first indication comes in 134/752 when Abū Muslim, in Samarqand, held all the booty that had been acquired after a successful campaign against the king of Kish in Central Asia and did not send the *khums* to the Caliph. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 464-5, 497; K. al-'Uyūn, pp. 224-5. The second clear indication comes in 198/814 in the time of Caliph al-Amīn. It is reported that before undertaking a military campaign the soldiers made al-Amīn promise that he would give them also the *khums* belonging to him, a condition to which al-Amīn yielded. As a result each man received after the end of the campaign six *dinars* more than he should rightly have obtained. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 524. Likewise, when Minkajūr, the 'Abbāsīd governor of Adharbayjān, came across a large treasure left by Bābak in one of his dwellings, he did not inform the Caliph about it, but instead seized it for himself. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 102.

¹⁹⁸Confrontation of this kind occurred during the war with 'Abdallāh b. 'Alī, the Caliph's uncle. The Khurāsānī officers who were on the side of the Caliph resented his decision to acquire the possessions of 'Abdallāh, claiming that 'Abdallāh's property was *ghanā'im* and therefore the Caliph was only entitled to one fifth, adding, "The rest is ours." *وَجَاءَ الْقَوَادُ إِلَى أَبِي مُسْلِمٍ، فَقَالُوا: نَحْنُ وَلِينَا أَمْرُ هَذَا الرَّجُلِ، وَغَنِمَا عَسْكَرَهُ، فَلَمْ يَسْأَلْ عَمَّا فِي أَيْدِينَا، إِنَّمَا لِأَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ هَذَا الْخُمْسِ.* Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 482; Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 164; K. al-'Uyūn, p. 219; Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. 3, p. 201.

¹⁹⁹Abū Yūsuf, *Kharāj*, p. 19; Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, vol. 14, p. 40; Māwardī, *Aḥkām*, p. 141. For no obvious reason some jurists, such as al-Farrā' (*Aḥkām*, p. 151), allot three shares to the cavalryman instead of two.

²⁰⁰Māwardī, *Aḥkām*, p. 141; Farrā', *Aḥkām*, p. 151.

distributed by the 'Abbāsīd Caliph to the members of the army either on happy occasions such as his accession to the Caliphate, when changing the line of succession, or in times of crisis as when facing an enemy. These grants took two forms. First, there were material grants such as land, whether in the capitals of Baghdad and Sāmarrā' or in the frontier regions. The lands in Baghdad, for example, known as *qaṭā'i*' (sing. *qaṭī'ah*)²⁰¹, were in perpetual ownership and were both heritable and transferable.²⁰² Meanwhile, on the frontiers, as a means toward creating a sense of attachment and thus ensuring the settlement of troops there, the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs granted in some areas both housing lands and agricultural lands to the troops serving there.²⁰³ From the dimensions we have relating to some of the housing lands, known as *khiṭaṭ* (sing. *khiṭṭah*), in these frontiers cities, such as those distributed in the frontier town of Ṭarsūs, one may deduce that they were only large enough to accommodate a single house.²⁰⁴

The second form that Caliphal grants took was that of hard cash. This type of grant was given occasionally and as the case required to the regular troops and their commanders, either before or after a successful military campaign. It is worth

²⁰¹During the first centuries of Islam, the term *qaṭī'a* donates a unit of land, often a sizeable estate, granted to prominent individuals in the garrison cities. See *EF*², s.v. "Kaṭī'a".

²⁰²Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, pp. 21, 25; Kennedy, 'Abbāsīd Caliphate, p. 78; al-'Alī, *Baghdād*, vol. 1, p. 169. According to al-Khaṭīb (*Baghdād*, vol. 1, p. 75), the dimensions of many of these *qaṭā'i*' were "fifty by fifty cubits". This means that they were not so big that their sale could cause problems for their inhabitants, which could happen if these people were other than the owner and his family living within them.

²⁰³Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 196-7, 200-3, 223.

²⁰⁴Balādhurī (*Futūḥ*, p. 201) notes that after the frontier town of Ṭarsūs was built in the time of al-Rashīd, there were 4,000 *khiṭaṭ* and that the dimension of each was 20 x 20 cubits.

noting, however, that in addition to these irregular bonuses, the commanders of the army used also to receive others on a regular basis, most likely annually. Their names were enlisted, along with the names of members of the 'Abbāsīd family and the intimates of the Caliph, in a special record where the names of each person was linked with the amount of the grant bestowed by the Caliph on him. Although the amounts of these seasonal grants were fixed, at least theoretically, for most of the time they were subject to fluctuation for various reasons. For the commanders, however, one of the main factors that determined the size of increases or decreases in their annual grant was the outcome that each accomplished on the battlefield.²⁰⁵

The Caliphal grants might also include within their scope members of the commanders' families. We know, for example, that after Caliph al-Amīn handed to 'Alī b. 'Īsā the governorship of al-Jabal in Khurāsān, he gave him 200,000 *dinars*, and 50,000 *dinars* for his son as well.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵Tabarī (*Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 172) mentions that al-Mahdī sat down one day to give rewards, which were distributed in his presence to his intimates (*khāṣṣah*) among his family and his army commanders. The names would be read to him and he would order increases of their normal bonuses by 10,000, 20,000, and similar amounts. There came before him one of the commanders and al-Mahdī then said, "This man is reduced by 500." The officer then asked, "O Commander of the faithful, why have you reduced my grant?" Al-Mahdī replied, "Because I sent you against an enemy of ours and you fled."

"جلس المهدي ذات يوم يعطي جوائز تقسم في خاصته من أهل بيته والقواد، وكان يُقرأ عليه الأسماء، فيأمر بالزيادة، العشرة الآلاف والعشرين آلاف، وما أشبه، فعرض عليه بعض القواد، فقال: يُحط هذا خمسمائة، فقال: لم حططني يا أمير المؤمنين؟ قال: الآن وجهتك إلى عدو لنا فانخرمت."

²⁰⁶Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 390.

Figures Mentioned by Al-Ṭabarī as Hard Cash Grants (*Ṣilāt*) Given by 'Abbāsīd Caliphs to Their Troops²⁰⁷

Year	Caliph	Size of Grant	Given To	Occasion
132/750	Abū al-'Abbās	500 <i>dirhams</i>	Each soldier who participated in the battle Zāb	For defeating ²⁰⁸ the Umayyad army
138/756	Al-Manṣūr	80,000 <i>dinars</i>	Al-'Abbās b. Muḥammad and 'Īsā b. 'Alī b. al-'Abbās	For leading the <i>Ṣā'ifāh</i> against the Byzantine frontiers ²⁰⁹
141/759	Al-Manṣūr	10,000 <i>dirhams</i>	Ma'n b. Zā'idah	For defending the Caliph during the Rāwandīyyah event ²¹⁰
169/786	Al-Hādī	200 <i>dirhams</i>	For each soldier who was with him in the campaign against Ṭabaristān	To prevent their mutiny after the death of al-Mahdī ²¹¹
195/811	Al-Amīn	200,000 <i>dinars</i>	'Alī b. 'Īsā b. Māhān	After changing the line of succession from al-Ma'mūn to his son Mūsā ²¹²
195/811	Al-Amīn	Three million <i>dirhams</i>	For the Khurāsānī commanders and their troops in Baghdad	To win their support in his fight against al-Ma'mūn ²¹³
196/812	Al-Amīn	500 <i>dirhams</i>	For each of his commanders	To face al-Ma'mūn's army, who by now were besieging Baghdad ²¹⁴
210/826	Al-Ma'mūn	50 million <i>dirhams</i>	Among his commanders	His marriage to the daughter of al-Ḥasan b. Sahl ²¹⁵

²⁰⁷ This table does not include reports of unspecified gifts.

²⁰⁸ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 435. In addition to the cash, the commanders would also receive standard gifts such as robes of honour, jewel-encrusted swords, horses, and gold collars.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 497.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 508. Ma'n was also awarded the governorship of Yemen.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 187. The purpose in distributing these grants was to prevent any riot by the army, who might exploit the death of al-Mahdī and demand that the new Caliph give them their *arzāq* three or more years in advance. However, this grant did not abate the troops' demands and indeed they were given two years of their *arzāq* in advance.

²¹² *Ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 390. In addition, 'Īsā also received 1,000 ornamented swords and 6,000 robes of honour. "ألف سيف على و ستة آلاف ثوب للخلع."

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 443. Mas'ūdī (*Murūj*, vol. 3, p. 409) indicates that the grants totalled 500,000 *dirhams*, which means that the number of commanders who received the grants was 1,000 men.

213/829	Al-Ma'mūn	Six million <i>dirhams</i>	All the army	After receiving 30 million <i>dirhams</i> in taxes (<i>kharāj</i>) from Syria and Egypt ²¹⁶
220/835	Al-Mu'taṣim	Two <i>dinars</i>	For each soldier who participated in the campaign against the <i>Zuṭṭ</i>	For defeating the <i>Zuṭṭ</i> ²¹⁷
223/838	Al-Mu'taṣim	One million <i>dirhams</i>	His commander al-Afshīn	In sending him to face the rebellion of Bābak ²¹⁸
223/838	Al-Mu'taṣim	20 million <i>dirhams</i> .	Ten million for al-Afshīn and ten million for the troops	For defeating Bābak ²¹⁹

Table 2.3: Figures Mentioned by Al-Ṭabarī as Hard Cash Grants (*Ṣilāt*) Given by 'Abbāsid Caliphs to Their Troops

Besides legitimate fiscal sources of income, the soldiers would sometimes disregard the law and take what were known as *ghulūl* ('seized goods'). One of the Islamic laws concerning booty strictly forbade warriors to seize for themselves anything whatsoever, even the smallest and most insignificant object, from the booty before it had been gathered and distributed justly amongst all.²²⁰ However, despite the extreme threat of punishment on the Day of Judgement, this did not prevent some cases of this transgression, first, in the time of the Prophet and, more increasingly, in later periods including the early 'Abbāsid era.²²¹ Although there is no specific provision in Islamic law regarding the sort of punishment that the *ghāl* (the illegal

²¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 608. Al-Ṭabarī also notes that al-Ma'mūn granted al-Ḥasan ten million *dirhams*, to be taken from the revenue of Fārs.

²¹⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 652-3.

²¹⁷*Ibid.*, vol. 9, p. 10.

²¹⁸In addition to this, al-Mu'taṣim also granted al-Afshīn 10,000 *dirhams* for every day he rode forth against the enemy and 5,000 *dirhams* for each day when he did not ride forth. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

²¹⁹Apart from this, the Caliph also presented al-Afshīn with a crown (*tawwajahu*) and girded him with two jewelled belts (*wishāḥayn*). Also, al-Mu'taṣim used to send every day a horse and a robe of honour to Afshīn from the moment he captured Bābak until he reached Sāmarrā'. *Ibid.*, pp. 52, 54.

²²⁰The only exception to this rule was objects taken for necessity, yet these should be returned immediately with the ending of the emergency. Abū Yūsuf, *al-Awzā'ī*, pp. 13-6.

²²¹For such cases in 'Abbāsid times, see Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 481-2.

seizer of booty) should receive, it seems that the authority had freedom to impose on such a person whatever punishment it thought suitable, which could be moral or physical.²²²

The practice of *tajā'ul* (or *ja'ā'il*) seems to have continued in 'Abbāsīd times and more particularly in the areas where the Arab tribal forces served. We read, for instance, that after rebuilding the frontier town of Malatya, Caliph al-Manṣūr allotted the garrison forces there ten *dinars* over their normal salary of 100 *dinars* as a *ma'ūnah*, "in addition to the *ju'l* which the tribes practised among themselves."²²³ According to Ibn Manẓūr, the *ju'l* was the sum of money which a soldier who was obligated to go to war gave to another person in recognition of the latter's going to the war on his behalf.²²⁴

Regarding the *mutatawwi'ah* (volunteers) who were not enrolled in the *Dīwān*, they usually joined the army at their own expense and sometimes they might even contribute to the overall expense of the campaigns that they took part in.²²⁵ To assist them in coping with their expenses while on active in service, the authority might give the needy amongst them a sum of money from the voluntary alms (*ṣadaqāt*), but

²²²Ibn al-Qayyim, *Zād*, vol. 2, p. 66; Ibn A'tham, *Futūḥ*, vol. 1, p. 350; Ibn al-Azraq, *Badā'i'*, vol. 2, pp. 55-6. To express his resentment at such behaviour, the Prophet is said to have refused to pray for *ghāl*s after their death (Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, vol. 3, p. 391; Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 3, p. 96). In Umayyad times the punishment for this crime was of a physical character, so that, for example, it is reported that Caliph 'Umar II ordered the cutting off of the hand of a *ghāl* (Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 5, p. 192).

²²³Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 223.

²²⁴Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, vol. 11, p. 111, s.v. *ju'l*. For an exhaustive discussion of the concept of *ju'l* in early Islam, see Bonner, "Ja'ā'il and the Holy War", pp. 45-64.

not from the State Treasury. Nevertheless, when it came to the distribution of the plunder, the *mutaṭawwi'ah* enjoyed the same rights as the regular troops.²²⁶

The People of the Book (Christians and Jews, otherwise known as *dhimmīs*, or protected people) were not required to serve in the army as the state was fully responsible for their protection in return for their payment of the *jizyah*. Even if they did participate, they were still legally not entitled to receive a regular allowance (*rizq*) nor had they any right to shares in the booty. Instead, in return for their service, they would be allotted an amount from the *khums* of the booty and this was called *raḍkh* (a paltry gift).²²⁷ However, on occasion the People of the Book might reach an agreement with the Muslim authority under which they committed themselves to support the Muslims whether by participating with them in actual fighting, defending the frontiers near to them, or keeping an eye on the Muslims' enemies. In return for such services they would be exempted from paying the *jizyah* and become entitled to a sharing in any captured plunder if they practically participated with the Muslims in combat.²²⁸

²²⁵Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 116.

²²⁶Farrā', *Aḥkām*, pp. 39, 152; Māwardī, *Aḥkām*, p. 141; Abū Yūsuf, *Kharāj*, p. 19.

²²⁷Jurisprudentially, women and children fell also within the same category. Nevertheless, there is no indication in 'Abbāsīd times of any participation by women, except for the one instance of the sisters of Ṣāliḥ b. 'Alī al-'Abbāsī, who vowed that if the Umayyad rule came to an end, they would fight for the sake of Allah. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 500. On the *raḍkh*, see Farrā', *Aḥkām*, p. 151; Māwardī, *Aḥkām*, pp. 129-30; Abū Yūsuf, *al-Awzā'ī*, pp. 37-40.

²²⁸Such an agreement took place between the Muslims in the time of 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb and the Christian Jarājimah (the Mardaites) who lived near the frontier town of Anṭākiyah. The agreement lasted right down to the time of the 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Mutawakkil (232-247/847-861), who imposed the *jizyah* upon them and instead gave a regular allowance (*rizq*) to those whose military service was needed. Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 189-91.

For slaves (*mamālīk* or *ghilmān*) military service was not compulsory. Nevertheless, for those who did choose to fight alongside their masters, they had no legal right to an allowance, although on some occasions they might receive a sum from their masters, who usually received more than their normal allowance on account of their using their slaves. Although slaves had no right to a share of the booty, those who participated in fighting and performed well in battle might be given some insignificant wares from the booty such as household goods (known as *kharthī al-ghanīmah*) and these were also classified as *raqḍkh*.²²⁹

2.2.5 The Size of the 'Abbāsīd Army

It is not an easy task to discover the exact number of men serving in the early 'Abbāsīd army. This is mainly because primary sources not only provide us with very little information of this kind, but also because of exaggeration in the few accounts that they provide and contain such information. Nevertheless, with the exercise of caution and close examination of the numbers that can be found in these sources, one may get some idea of the size of 'Abbāsīds' army at certain periods.

The earliest evidence of the size of the 'Abbāsīd army relates to 23 Rajab 131/18 March 749 and the battle of Jābalq near Iṣfahān. To match the Syrian army under 'Āmir b. Ḍubārah, which is said to have numbered between 100,000 and 150,000 men,²³⁰ Qaḥṭabah b. Shabīb had to assemble most of the available revolutionary

²²⁹Ibn Sallām, *Amwāl*, pp. 254-7, 354-5.

²³⁰Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 405-6.

troops, who were widely spread across Khurāsān. Qaḥṭabah, along with eleven military commanders, were able to put 20,000 men in the battlefield.²³¹ In addition to this force, we know that there were other forces, most probably numbering between 5,000 and 10,000 men, divided between Abū Muslim in Nīshāpūr and al-Ḥasan b. Qaḥṭabah, who now lay siege against the Syrian forces in Nahāwand under the leadership of Mālīk b. Adham.²³² This would give a total force of some 25,000 to 30,000 men.²³³

The second note relating to the size of the 'Abbāsīd army concerns the years 131/749 and 132/750. After the surrender of the Syrian army in Nahāwand, Qaḥṭabah dispatched 4,000 men under Abū 'Awn b. Yazīd al-Khurāsānī and Mālīk b. Ṭarīf to face 'Uthmān b. Sufyān and his Syrian forces in Shahrazūr in the territory of Mawṣil.²³⁴ With the defeat of the latter, Caliph Marwān b. Muḥammad found that he had no other option but to lead personally a large army and march from Ḥarrān toward the region of Mawṣil to try to halt the advance of Abū 'Awn. To be able to face Marwān's army, Abū Salamah al-Khallāl, the first 'Abbāsīd vizier, sent

²³¹*Ibid.*, p. 406.

²³²*Ibid.*, pp. 404-5.

²³³The element of exaggeration clearly appears in the account given by Ibn al-'Umrānī (*al-Anbā'*, p. 59), who estimates the number of those who joined Abū Muslim in the early stage of the 'Abbāsīd revolution at 70,000 cavalry and 70,000 infantry.

²³⁴Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 409; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. 3, p. 137.

reinforcements to Abū 'Awn, whose army thereby increased to 19,000 men.²³⁵ This number represents almost half of the 'Abbāsid forces at that time and by this force 'Abdallāh b. 'Alī, who was sent by the new Caliph, Abū al-'Abbās, to take over the army command, entered the decisive battle with Marwān in Zāb on 11 Jumādā II 132/26 February 750.²³⁶ In addition to this force, there were 20,000 men under al-Ḥasan b. Qaḥṭabah, who now lay siege around the 30,000 Syrian troops under Ibn Hubayrah inside Wāsiṭ.²³⁷ Moreover, there must have been other forces, probably numbering over 10,000, who were left with Abū Muslim in Khurāsān.²³⁸ Therefore, the overall total of men in the 'Abbāsid army at the outset of 'Abbāsid rule was about 50,000.²³⁹

²³⁵Ṭabarī (*Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 432) reports that Abū Salamah sent 'Uyaynah b. Mūsā, al-Manhāl b. Fatān, and Ishāq b. Ṭalḥah al-Ṭā'ī with 3,000 men. Also, 'Abū al-'Abbās, who had just been proclaimed Caliph in Kūfah, sent to Abū 'Awn 2,000 men under Salamah b. Muḥammad, 1,500 under 'Abdallāh al-Ṭā'ī, 2,000 under 'Abd al-Ḥamīd b. Rub'ī, and 500 under Waddās b. Naḍlah. Almost the same figures are given by the author of *Akḥbār* (p. 378) when he mentions that Abū 'Awn had 18,000 men before 'Abdallāh b. 'Alī came, probably along with 1,000 men, and took over the command.

²³⁶Two figures are given by al-Ṭabarī (*Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 439) for the number of men in the 'Abbāsid army at Zāb. The first is 20,000, which seems close to the truth, and the second is 10,000 men. The 20,000 figure is also mentioned by al-Azdī (*Tārīkh*, p. 126).

²³⁷Dīnawarī, *al-Akḥbār*, p. 369.

²³⁸Our estimate of the number of troops left with Abū Muslim is based on an account by Ibn Qutaybah (*Imāmah*, pt. 2, p. 158), who mentions that when Abū Muslim came from Khurāsān to Kūfah at the request of Caliph Abū al-'Abbās, "he had with him 10,000 troops from the people of Khurāsān."

²³⁹The increase in numbers should be attributed mainly to the Iraqis, especially from among the Yemenite tribesmen, who joined the revolutionary army. For example, *Akḥbār* (p. 367) indicates that Muḥammad b. Khālīd al-Qasrī, along with 1,000 men from his tribe, *mawālī*, and neighbours in Kūfah, joined the 'Abbāsid forces. Meanwhile, al-Balādhurī (*Ansāb*, vol. 3, p. 138), with an element of exaggeration, indicates that Muḥammad b. Khālīd al-Qasrī, along with 11,000 Kūfans, joined the revolutionary forces. See also Dīnawarī, *Akḥbār*, p. 368.

The next evidence of the size of the 'Abbāsīd army relates to the time of the second Caliph, al-Manṣūr. Facing the rebellion of Ibrāhīm b. 'Abdallāh b. al-Ḥasan in Baṣrah in 145/762-763, which broke out two months after the rebellion of his brother Muḥammad in Madīnah, al-Manṣūr realized that the 'Abbāsīd capital (al-Hāshimīyyah) was almost defenceless. His armies were widely scattered as 4,000 men had been sent with his nephew 'Isā b. Mūsā to face Muḥammad's movement in Madīnah, 30,000 men were with his son al-Mahdī in al-Rayy, 40,000 were on a campaign in North Africa under the leadership of Muḥammad b. Ash'ath, and 1,000 men were with him in Kūfah.²⁴⁰ According to this account, the total number came to 75,000 men. However, there must have been other forces that the Caliph did not mention. These forces, which were relatively small, consisted of bands of men (*rawābiṭ*) stationed in garrisons that were scattered across the various provinces. For example, 2,000 troops under Ḥarb b. 'Abdallāh al-Rāwandī were stationed in Mawṣil to defend it against any attack by the Khārijites.²⁴¹ Also, there were 4,000 troops stationed in al-Ahwāz under its governor, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn.²⁴² In the Jazīrah province, although sources do not mention the size of its garrisons in the time of Ibrāhīm's rebellion in 145/763, yet there are earlier indications of such garrisons. Al-Ṭabarī, for example, indicates that during the rebellion of Abū al-Ward in

²⁴⁰Frustrated by the rebellion of Ibrāhīm, al-Manṣūr swore that if he overcame this dilemma, he would not so divide his army again and he would always keep 30,000 men close beside him. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 638-9; Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, p. 207; Ibn Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 171; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 99.

²⁴¹Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 195; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 632; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 98.

²⁴²Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 636.

132/750 there were 3,000 men posted in Ḥarrān under Mūsā b. Ka'b.²⁴³ Yet this number of garrison soldiers seems to drop later. Al-Ṭabarī points out that during the rebellion of al-Mallabād b. Ḥarmalah al-Shaybānī in 137/755, there were only 1,000 'Abbāsīd forces in all the Jazīrah garrisons, a number which most probably continued to hold at that level.²⁴⁴ In addition, a large number of troops must also have been stationed on the frontiers. On the Byzantine frontiers their number may have exceeded 25,000.²⁴⁵ Similar figures probably also apply to the frontiers with Armenia, Adharbayjān, and Sind.²⁴⁶ This would give us an overall total of about 130,000 'Abbāsīd troops in the reign of al-Manṣūr. However, the number seems to have increased over the years, as we learn from participants who were involved in some of the military expeditions that the 'Abbāsīds had to wage against their enemies.²⁴⁷

²⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 446.

²⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 495. It is worth noting that not all the provinces had garrisons. Baṣrah, Fārs, and Madīnah, for example, seem to have had none. When Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥusayn rebelled in Baṣrah, there were only 600 government troops to oppose him. *Ibid.*, p. 635. Also, when Ḥusayn b. 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan revolted in Madīnah in 169/786, there were only 200 local troops to face him. Kennedy, *'Abbasid, Caliphate* p. 78; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 194.

²⁴⁵Kennedy, *Abbasid Caliphate*, p. 77.

²⁴⁶With regard to Sind, for example, al-Ṭabarī (*Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 464) mentions that in 134/752 Caliph Abū al-'Abbās al-Saffāḥ sent 4,000 Arab troops from Baṣrah under Mūsā b. Ka'b to face the rebellion of Manṣūr b. Jumhūr in Sind. As regards Armenia and Adharbayjān, although the sources clearly indicate that the 'Abbāsīds had transferred many of the Iraqi troops who were recipients from the *Dīwān*, especially men from Baṣrah and Kūfah, to these frontiers, yet no clue is given as to how many they were. See e.g. Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, pp. 371-2, 426; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 246-7, 405.

²⁴⁷It is worth noting that not all the participants in these campaigns were regular soldiers, but rather many of them would have been *mutaṭawwi'ah* (volunteers) or levied forces (*furūq*) recruited for a short period of military service.

List of Figures Cited for the Number of 'Abbāsīd Troops Taking Part in Military Campaigns

Year	Caliph	Number of Troops	Led By	Sent To
142/758-9	Al-Manṣūr	20,000	'Āmir b. Īsmā'īl al-Ḥārithī	Armenia, as reinforcements for al-Ḥasan b. Qaḥṭabah in his war with the Khazars ²⁴⁸
145/762-3	Al-Manṣūr	5,000 ²⁴⁹	'Āmir b. Ismā'īl	Wāsiṭ, which had been captured by Ibrāhīm's supporters ²⁵⁰
150/767	Al-Manṣūr	34,000	Khāzim b. Khuzaymah	Khurāsān, to deal with the rebellion of Ustādhsīs ²⁵¹
154/771	Al-Manṣūr	50,000	Yazīd b. Ḥātim	Ifriqiya, to deal with the Khārijite rebellion ²⁵²
159/776	Al-Mahdī	9,200 ²⁵³	'Abd al-Malik b. Shihāb al-Misma'i	Sind ²⁵⁴
162/779	Al-Mahdī	30,000 a part from the <i>mutaṭawwi'ah</i>	Al-Ḥasan b. Qaḥṭabah	The Byzantine frontiers, on a summer campaign (<i>ṣā'ifah</i>) ²⁵⁵
165/782	Al-Mahdī	95,793	Hārūn	The Byzantines, on a summer campaign ²⁵⁶
168/785	Al-Mahdī	40,000	Sa'id al-Ḥarshī	Ṭabaristān
176/793	Hārūn	50,000	Al-Faḍl b. Yaḥyā	Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥasan and his rebels ²⁵⁷

²⁴⁸Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 372.

²⁴⁹In another narration the number is said to have been 20,000. However, the first number seems closer to the truth. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 638.

²⁵⁰*Ibid.*

²⁵¹*Ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 30.

²⁵²*Ibid.*, p. 44.

²⁵³2,000 (*faraḍ*) men were from Baṣrah 1,500 *mutaṭawwi'ah* were from the frontiers, 700 were Syrians, 1,000 were *mutaṭawwi'ah* from Baṣrah, and 4,000 were Aswāriyyīns and Sayābijah. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 116.

²⁵⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 116-7.

²⁵⁵*Ibid.*, p. 142.

²⁵⁶*Ibid.*, p. 152.

²⁵⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 242-3.

190/806	Hārūn	135,000 (<i>murtaziq</i>) apart from <i>mutaṭawwi'ah</i> , camp- followers, and others who were not enlisted in the <i>Dīwān</i>	The Caliph himself	The Byzantine city of Heraclea ²⁵⁸
191/807	Hārūn	30,000 Khurāsānīs	Harthamah b. A'yan	The Byzantines, on a summer campaign ²⁵⁹
192/808	Hārūn	10,000	'Abdallāh b. Mālik	Adharbayjān, to deal with the Khurramiyyah ²⁶⁰
195/811	Al-Amīn	40,000 ²⁶¹	'Alī b. 'Īsā b. Māhān	Khurāsān, to face al- Ma'mūn's forces led by Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn ²⁶²
195/811	Al-Amīn	20,000	'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Abnāwī	Khurāsān, to halt the advance of Ṭāhir's army toward Baghdad ²⁶³
195/811	Al-Amīn	40,000 ²⁶⁴	Aḥmad b. Mazyad and 'Abdallāh b. Ḥumayd b. Qaḥṭabah	Ḥulwān, to defend it against al-Ma'mūn's army ²⁶⁵
223/819	Al-Mu'taṣim	Between 200,000 and 500,000 ²⁶⁶	The Caliph himself	Against the Byzantine city of Amorium ²⁶⁷

Table 2.4: List of Figures Cited for the Number of 'Abbāsīd Troops Taking Part in Military Campaigns

²⁵⁸*Ibid.*, p. 320.

²⁵⁹*Ibid.*, p. 323.

²⁶⁰*Ibid.*, p. 339.

²⁶¹Two figures appear in al-Ṭabarī: 40,000 and 50,000 (*ibid.*, pp. 391, 405).

²⁶²The people in Baghdad said that this was the biggest army they had ever seen. *Ibid.*, p. 406.

²⁶³*Ibid.*, p. 412.

²⁶⁴20,000 of these troops were *A'rāb* and 20,000 were *abnā'*.

²⁶⁵Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 423.

²⁶⁶Many of these were *mutaṭawwi'ah* and, according to Ya'qūbī (*Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 476), the number of the regular troops (*murtazaqah*) who were with al-Mu'taṣim in this campaign was 80,000 men.

²⁶⁷Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 4, p. 60.

Summary

After tracing the history of the *Dīwān al-Jund* from its inception to the end of the Umayyad dynasty, in this chapter we have also examined in detail the *Dīwān* under the early 'Abbāsīd Caliphate, when fresh initiatives were introduced regarding many of its organizational procedures. Among many other practicalities, these new initiatives affected the way the early 'Abbāsīds' soldiers were registered, the methods of distributing their pay, and, indeed, the very concepts of '*aṭā*' and '*arzāq*', which underwent some serious modification.

The most obvious feature of the *Dīwān al-Jund* under the 'Abbāsīds was the move from the system of enlistment by *nasab* to a system of enlistment according to personal names, fathers' names, and regions of soldiers' origin. For Central Asian troops with no clear geographical origins, registration was according to race, as they were all generally denoted as *Atrāk* (Turks).

The early 'Abbāsīd soldiers were organized in the *Dīwān* according to military contingents from particular geographical areas. Each commander, along with the troops under his command, was allocated a separate register within the main military register. In turn, each of these separate registers contained discrete records for each soldier, which would include details of his physical appearance and his rate of pay, thereby eliminating any confusion over soldiers with the same name and facilitating also the detection of infiltrators.

Running the affairs of the *Dīwān al-Jund* was entrusted to very qualified secretaries best known as *Kuttāb al-Jund*. Among the qualifications required in them were knowledge of the distinguishing features of men, their characteristics, the distinguishing marks of beasts, and knowledge of arithmetic.

The distribution of soldiers' pay under the early 'Abbāsids was carried out through the issuing of the 'document of authorization' (*ṣakk*), which would contain the number of recipients and the total amount of their pay. After being verified and sealed by the Caliph or his vizier, the *ṣakk* would then be forwarded to the Paymaster General of the Treasury, who would thereupon release the necessary funds to the Award Office (*Majlis al-I'tā*). The actual distribution of the soldiers' pay was carried out by appointed officials best known as *munfiqīn* or *mu'tīn*, who were assisted by other officials called *'urrāḍ* (sing. *'ārīḍ*). After the pay had been distributed among the soldiers, a report would be drawn up stating the actual amount distributed and any savings that had been made.

The timetable for distributing the soldiers' pay during the first century of 'Abbāsīd rule tended to vary from one Caliph to another, depending very much on the financial situation under each one. The normal reaction of the soldiers to their pay falling into arrears was for them to mutiny. This, in fact, became the set form, growing worse from the time of Caliph al-Rashīd onwards. The reasons for the payments' falling into arrears in early 'Abbāsīd times centralized mainly on the failure of most of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs to reserve funds for emergencies and the ill-conceived practice of paying all their troops at the same time. Efforts were made to overcome these

financial difficulties by taking loans from the wealthy people, postponing the pay-day until taxes (particularly the *kharāj*) had been received, substituting part of the pay in foodstuffs, or simply making the army commanders responsible for covering campaign expenses, including the pay of their troops, out of their own pockets.

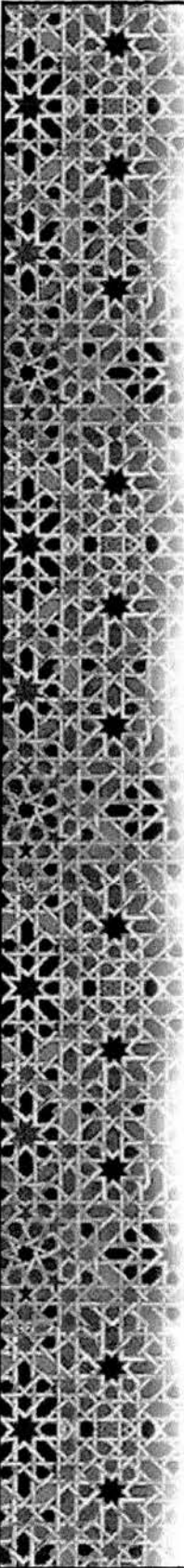
One of the significant developments that came with the rise of the 'Abbāsids to power was a change in the meaning and concept of both the terms '*aṭā*' and *arzāq*. The term *arzāq* under the early 'Abbāsids no longer applied to the foodstuffs given by the state since the time of 'Umar up to the downfall of the Umayyads to the recipients of the *Dīwān* and their families, but simply denoted a cash allowance received only by those who were registered in the central *Dīwān* in Baghdad and engaged in active service in the army all the year around. Also, The term '*aṭā*', within its civil context as a civil pension, was no longer a right that could be claimed or inherited from father to son. Instead, it meant a grant that the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs gave in a selective manner and which could be terminated by the death of the recipient or by the displeasure of the Caliph or his officials with its beneficiary. Meanwhile, within its military context, the term '*aṭā*' became basically a cash allowance paid to the Arab tribal forces as long as they were on active military duty.

Unlike the Umayyads, the 'Abbāsids took into account two main factors in assessing the rate of pay for their soldiers: military division and location. Commonly, the cavalymen received double the amount that the infantrymen would receive. Further, the troops serving in the frontier regions received higher pay than that received by their counterparts in Baghdad. The soldiers' rates of pay during the century of

'Abbāsid rule fluctuated widely, depending to a great extent on the economic and political circumstances under each Caliph. In addition to their normal pay, the 'Abbāsids' soldiers also had access to other sources of funding, most importantly booty, which was an area of serious dispute between the army and the 'Abbāsid Caliphs concerning the proper manner of its classification and distribution. As the claim of the ruling authority tended to decline, the soldiers used the strength of their position to assert their personal claim.

Volunteers, People of the Book (*Dhimmīs*), and slaves were all free from obligation to serve in the army, but when they did choose to serve, each class was rewarded differently from the others.

The size of the 'Abbāsid army varied widely under the different Caliphs, beginning at the start of 'Abbāsid rule with some 50,000 men and reaching a peak in the time of Caliph al-Mu'taṣim.



Chapter 3

The Military Units and Support Services

Introduction

A common basis for organization of Muslim armies on the battlefield was the division of the participants into units according to the functions that the men in each unit would perform. At the most general level, these units could be classified, for convenience, into two types: the military units, consisting of those men directly involved in the actual fighting, and the supportive units, a relatively small group by comparison, whose functions were mostly of a non-combative nature. This chapter attempts to describe these units during the early ‘Abbāsid period, explaining their characteristics, their special roles, and their equipment.

3.1 The Military Units

3.1.1 The Cavalry

The cavalry (*fursān* or *khayyālah*) played a major role in the history of Muslim armies. The Qur’ān (VIII, 60) and the Prophet both encouraged the Muslims to have horses and to train them for battle.¹ Moreover, the share of the booty distributed to the cavalryman (*fāris*) was twice the share received by the infantryman (*rājil*), one share being for himself and the other for his horse.² All this was a great incentive therefore for the Muslims to acquire horses and take good care of them, and it was not surprising that the cavalry became a significant element in the military success of the Muslims. During the ‘Abbāsid period, an extensive and varied literature

¹Abū ‘Ubaydah, *Khayl*, p. 109; Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, vol. 3, p. 1019.

flourished, describing in detail, among other matters, the colour, breeding, temperament, accoutrements, and names of horses. Some more specialist literature dealt with equine diseases and how to treat them, while the concern of other writers was with mounted combat.³

As in earlier revolutions, the number of horses available to the 'Abbāsids in the early days of their revolution was relatively small. Most of their fighting forces at that early stage came from among the early Arab settlers and Iranians, most of whom were infantrymen and not very well armed.⁴ Nevertheless, the number of horsemen seems to have been rapidly augmented. This was in consequence, first, of enlistment by Arab tribal forces from Yemen and Rabī'ah who had previously served in the Umayyad military institution as cavalry, and, second, of the sizeable number of horses seized by the revolutionary forces from the defeated Syrian army, which was predominantly composed of cavalry. Evidence of this is found in reports of the battle that took place at Jābalq, near Iṣfahān, on the 23 Rajab 131/18 March 749. It is

²Ibn Sallām, *Amwāl*, p. 309; Abū Yūsuf, *Siyar al-Awzā'ī*, p. 17.

³See, e.g., Abū 'Ubaydah (d. 210/826), *Kitāb al-Khayl*; Hishām al-Kalbī (d. 207/823), *Kitāb al-Khayl*; Aṣma'ī (d. 213/829), *Kitāb al-Khayl* and *Kitāb al-Sarj wa' l-Lijām*; al-Madā'inī (d. 215/830), *Kitāb al-Khayl wa' l-Rihān*; Aḥmad b. Ḥātim (d. 231/846), *Kitāb al-Khayl*; al-'Utbi (d. 228/843), *Kitāb al-Khayl*; Muḥammad b. Ziyād al-A'rābī (d. 231/836), *Kitāb al-Khayl* and *Kitāb Nasab al-Khayl*; Aḥmad al-Khazzāz (d. 258/872), *Kitāb al-Ḥalā'il wa' l-Rihān*. For further information on writing in the early 'Abbāsīd period on horses and related matters, see Gorguis 'Awwād, *Maṣādir al-Turāth al-'Askarī 'inda al-'Arab*, vol. 1, pp. 294-305 (3 vols., Baghdad, 1982); Ahsan, *Social life*, p. 244, n. 1; *EF*, s.v. "Furūsiyya".

reported that the consolidated ‘Abbāsid forces, under the leadership of Qaḥṭabah, entered the battle with 20,000 men, including both cavalry and infantry.⁵

Meanwhile, the Syrian army, under the leadership of ‘Āmir b. Ḍubārah, numbered between 100,000 and 150,000, all of whom were horsemen and very well equipped, to a degree that earned them the title ‘the army of all armies’ (*‘askar al-‘asākir*).⁶

The outcome of the battle was a very swift and decisive victory for the revolutionary forces, as a result of which they captured a large number of horses, weapons, and slaves.⁷ We find indications that, not long after this battle, the number of horsemen in the revolutionary forces almost equalled, if not in fact exceeded, that of the foot-soldiers. The first of these appears in accounts of the battle between Qaḥṭabah and Ziyād b. Hubayrah on 8 Muḥarram 132/27 August 749 in the region called Upper Fallūjah in Iraq. In this battle, as various chronicles indicate, Qaḥṭabah was able to order each of his horsemen to carry a foot-soldier with him across the River Euphrates from the west to the east bank in order to face the Umayyad army.⁸ Another example comes four months later in reports of the decisive battle at Zāb, which took place on 11 Jumādā II 132/26 January/ 750 between ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Alī

⁴Thus, Dīnawarī (*Akḥbār*, p. 361), who gives a description of those who joined Abū Muslim during the early days of the open revolt in Ramaḍān 129/June 747, says, ‘People came over to Abū Muslim from Herat, Būshanj, Marw al-Rūdh, Ṭāliqān, Nasā, Abiward, Ṭūs, Nishāpūr, Sarakhs, Balkh, Ṣaghāniyān, Ṭukhāristān, Khuttalān, Kasaf, and Nasaf. They all came clad in black garments as well as having blacked half of the wooden clubs that they had, which they called “clubs for hitting unbelievers” (*kāfir kūbāt*). They came on foot and riding on donkeys and horses.’ Also, Ṭabarī (*Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 357) indicates that of the first 2,200 who joined the revolt, there were only 20 horsemen among them.

⁵Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 406.

⁶Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, 5, vol. p. 56; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 405.

⁷Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 406; *Akḥbār*, p. 346; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 57.

and the Syrian forces under the leadership of Caliph Marwān. In order to be able to hold back the massive assault of the Syrian cavalry forces and most likely also to compensate for the shortage of foot-soldiers in his army, ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Alī ordered his horsemen to carry out the role normally played by the foot-soldiers, that is, to dismount from their steeds and kneel down in close formation with their lances held out in front of them with the intention of wounding and startling the Syrian horses.⁹

After the end of the revolutionary era, the cavalry troops continued to form the backbone of the ‘Abbāsid armies and they were often responsible for the final outcome of a battle.¹⁰ The ever-increasing reliance on the cavalry reached its zenith with the introduction of the Turks into the ‘Abbāsid military institution. Al-Jāḥiẓ, in his *Risālah fi Manāqib al-Atrāk*, discusses at length their martial skills as first-class horsemen. He says:

If the Turk's daily life were to be reckoned up in detail, he would be found to spend more time in the saddle than on the ground...The Turk is at one and the same time herdsman, groom, trainer, horse-dealer, farrier, rider: in short, a one-man team. When the Turk travels with horsemen of other races, he covers twenty miles to their ten, leaving them and circling around to the right and left, up and down to the bottom of the gullies, and shouting all the while at anything that runs, crawls, flies or stands still. The Turks never travel like the rest of the band, and never ride straight ahead. On a long, hard ride, when it is noon and the halting-place is still afar off, all are silent, oppressed with fatigue and overwhelmed with weariness. Their misery leaves no room

⁸ *Akhhbār*, p. 370; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 416.

⁹ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 433-4; Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 129; K. al-‘Uyūn, p. 202.

¹⁰ The importance of the horsemen in the army is indicated by al-Jāḥiẓ, who writes, "Horses and their riders are the pivot of the armies. They it is who withdraw and return to charge, who fold the battalions around themselves as a letter is folded, and then scatter them like hairs." Jāḥiẓ, *Rasāil*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 53 (English translation quoted from Pellat, *Life*, p. 95).

for conversation. Everything round them crackles in the intense heat, or perhaps is frozen hard. As the journey drags on, even the toughest and most resolute begin to wish that the ground would open under their feet. At the sight of a mirage or a marker post on a ridge they are transported with joy, supposing it to be the halting-place. When at last they reach it, the horsemen all drop from the saddle and stagger about bandy-legged like children who have been given an enema, groaning like sick men, yawning to refresh themselves and stretching luxuriously to overcome their stiffness. But your Turk, though he has covered twice the distance and dislocated his shoulders with shooting, has only to catch sight of a gazelle or an onager near the halting-place, or put up a fox or a hare, and he is off again at a gallop as though he had only just mounted. It might have been someone else who had done that long ride and endured all that weariness.¹¹

Enhancing their forces with horsemen must have obligated the 'Abbāsid Caliphs to provide the ever-increase number of their forces with a sufficient number of riding beasts. Riding beasts in early 'Abbāsid times were usually obtained through three main sources, first, through what the army could capture from their enemies after the end of the fight. As examples, first, during the expedition against the Byzantines in 165/782, the 'Abbāsid army is reported to have taken as booty 20,000 riding beasts with all their equipment.¹² Again, in another campaign against the Byzantines, in 188/804, the 'Abbāsid forces seized 4,000 riding beasts.¹³ The second source was through the peace treaties that the 'Abbāsid forces would sign with their enemies, by which the former stipulated that the latter must provide the central government in

¹¹ Jāhīz, *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, pt. 1, pp. 49-50 (English translation quoted from Pellat, *Life*, pp. 94-5).

¹² Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 153; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 248.

¹³ Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 157; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 313.

Baghdad with a specified number of riding beasts.¹⁴ The third prime source of beasts was through what some Islamic provinces, especially these known for their thoroughbred horses such as Egypt and Khurāsān, would send to Baghdad whether as a gifts or as part of the taxes imposed on them.¹⁵

The great enthusiasm of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphs for horses and the activities associated with them was undoubtedly reflected in the establishment of hippodromes (*mayādān*, sing. *maydān*) in their cities, such as were found in the suburb of al-Shammāsiyyah (east of Baghdad), Ruṣāfah, Sāmarrā’, or in the city of Raqqah in Jazīrah.¹⁶ The ‘Abbāsīd Caliph would arrive at the hippodrome accompanied by his high officials and intimate associates to watch with interest racing competitions between their own horses¹⁷ or to pass the time by playing games on horseback such as polo (*ṣawlaqjān*).¹⁸ At these hippodromes, which also served as training grounds for the army, the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphs would also come and watch their horsemen being trained

¹⁴One example of this comes in 214/829 during the reign of al-Ma’mūn. It is reported that the peace treaty between the ‘Abbāsīd forces and the Ṣanāriyyah of Armenia stipulated that the latter must provide the ‘Abbāsīds with 3,000 brood mares (*ramakān*, sing. *ramkah*). Ya’qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 1, p. 464.

¹⁵Jahshiyārī, *Wuzarā’*, p. 283; Tha’ālibī, *Laṭā’if*, pp. 166-7; Ibn Iyās, *Kitāb Tārīkh Miṣr*, vol. 1, pp. 3, 7; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 314.

¹⁶Mas’ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, p. 373; Ya’qūbī, *Buldān*, pp. 24, 34; Jahshiyārī, *Wuzarā’*, p. 207.

¹⁷Mas’ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, p. 373; Jahshiyārī, *Wuzarā’*, p. 207. The first *maydān* founded in Baghdad for horse-racing is reported to have been built by Caliph al-Mahdī. For more details on the establishment of hippodromes in the different ‘Abbāsīd capitals, see Rogers, “Sāmarrā’,” pp. 151-5; Ahsan, *Social Life*, pp. 262-3; al-‘Alī, “Foundation,” pp. 93, 101.

¹⁸Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 372; vol. 9, p. 121; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 410; K. al-‘Uyūn, p. 321. Ibn Ṭīqṭaqā (*Fakhrī*, p. 163) notes that Caliph al-Rashīd was the first Muslim Caliph to play polo. For more details of the various games played on horseback in the time of the ‘Abbāsīds, see Ahsan, *Social Life*, pp. 252-8.

in combat skills (*furūsiyyah*). Al-Mu‘taṣim, for example, is said to have supervised the training of his horsemen, who would be clothed in white for the classes and have the heads of their lances steeped in saffron, so that if one hit another, the strike would be visible.¹⁹ The training of the ‘Abbāsīd horsemen, which the Khurāsānīs prided themselves in, would also include learning the skills and tactics of evasion (*mujāwalah*); jousting (*mushāwalah*); hit and run (*karr wa-farr*); leaping over horseback (*nazw*); and using the bow or lance to shoot a couching animal (*mujthamah*), a flying bird (*ṭā’ir khaṭāf*), or a target placed over the head of a lance or similar object (*burjāss*). Moreover, the training would also include learning the skilful manoeuvring involved in polo.²⁰

The selection of the optimum breeds of horses for use by their cavalymen was given great attention by the ‘Abbāsīds, especially in wartime. During the campaign of ‘Ammūriyyah, for example, Caliph al-Mu‘taṣim commanded the use of piebald horses (*bulq*) by his cavalry and, when he set out, there were 4,000 piebald horses in the vanguard of his army alone.²¹ The emphasis that was placed on the fitness of the cavalry horses before they entered combat is also indicated in another account of the same military campaign. As a way of testing the adequacy of the horses of his cavalry, Ashnās, one of the chief commanders, rode with 500 of his horsemen and, at

¹⁹ Al-Aḥḍab, *Kitāb al-Furūsiyyah*, p. 58.

²⁰ Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā’il*, vol. 1, pt. 1, pp. 20-1.

²¹ Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, vol. 3, p. 287; *ibid.*, *Ma’āthir al-Anā’ih*, vol. 1, p. 221; Anṣārī, *Tafrīḥ al-Kurūb*, p. 48. Literally the word *bulq* means ‘piebald’ or ‘spotted’. When it was a matter of horses’ characters, the Arabs seem to have considered this sort as the best breed of racehorse. See Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, s.v. “Ablaq”; Ibn Sīdah, *al-Mukhaṣṣaṣ*, pt. 6, vol. 2, p. 152.

a distance of about one mile from their camp, Ashnās whipped his mount and galloped furiously for about two miles. He then stopped to look at his cavalry who were ranged behind and those who had not kept up with the main body because of the inadequacy of their horses were sent back to the camp.²²

The cavalry squadrons were generally classified into two categories according to the horses that they rode. First were those who rode horses that were armoured with cuirasses, made either from leather or steel. These cuirasses were known as *tajāff* and therefore horses armoured in this way were known as *al-mujaffafah*.²³ The second group consisted of those horses that had no cuirasses, referred to as *mujarradah* (bare)²⁴ and the cavalry squadrons made up of this type of horse were usually sent in pursuit of fleeing enemy troops since these horses carried nothing inessential that might load them down.²⁵

It is worth noting, however, that besides horses, ‘Abbāsīd horsemen might sometimes ride *barādhān* (sing. *birdhawn* = hinny) or *bighāl* (sing. *baghl* = mule). The *birdhawn* was the product of the union of a female-donkey and a stallion, while the *baghl* came from the union of a donkey and a mare.²⁶ The tiro horseman would start his training on a *birdhawn* or a *baghl* as they were more tractable. On the battlefield, to prove his bravery in that he could not successfully run back, the

²²Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 60.

²³*Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 586; Azdī, *Tārīkh*, pp.129, 392.

²⁴Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 477.

²⁵Harthamī, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 47.

horseman might ride a *baghl* rather than a horse.²⁷ With the same bravado in view, if he rode a horse, he might hamstring (*‘aqr*) his horse and fight as an infantryman.²⁸ In some cases, we also find that the commander of the army would wander about the camp and command the fighting mounted on a *birdhawn*.²⁹ The *baghl*, however, proved its value during the long march. Apart from being used to transport supplies, these beasts were sometimes ridden, while the horses were led along unriden.³⁰ In his campaign against Ibn al-Sarī in Egypt in 210/825, ‘Abdallāh b. Ṭāhir is reported to have mounted his soldiers on mules, two men on each mule, with all their arms and equipment, while their horses were led along beside them.³¹

The arms of the ‘Abbāsīd horsemen included either a straight, short sword or a long, curved one, the latter being the special pride of the Khurāsānīs.³² As for lances, it seems that long, heavy lances were most common among the cavalry at the beginning of the ‘Abbāsīd rule when the Arab elements were dominant in the army.³³ However, with an increasing reliance on non-Arabs, such as the Iranians and the Turks, the use of short, hollow lances came to dominate among the ‘Abbāsīd horsemen. This type of lance was described as “the lance of the Turkish horsemen

²⁶ Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā’il*, vol. 1, pt. 2, pp. 296-8.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 376.

²⁸ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 434; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 387.

²⁹ Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, p. 389; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 393.

³⁰ Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā’il*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 42.

³¹ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 610.

³² Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, vol. 1, pt. 1, pp. 20, 26.

and the *abnā'* if they were cavalry."³⁴ The advantage of these lances over the long, heavy lance type was their greater penetrating power and lightness to horsemen to carry.³⁵

The introduction of non-Arab elements, especially Turks, led to the appearance of new weapons that were previously unknown to either the Arab or Iranian cavalry. One of these was the lasso (*wahaq*).³⁶ Explaining the efficiency of this weapon when used by the Turkish horsemen, al-Jāḥiẓ says, "The Turk is especially formidable in his trick of using his lasso to throw a horse and unseat its rider, all at full gallop."³⁷ Moreover, the 'Abbāsīd horsemen, many of whom were clad in mail with iron helmets, would also arm themselves with shields and maces. The mace (*dabbūs*), made of iron or steel with a cubical head, was normally secured under the stirrup leather and was used to smash the skulls of foes.³⁸

The horseman had to have some knowledge of horses, their equipment, veterinary medicine, and farriery.³⁹ When 'Abbāsīd cavalry were used in combat, their position in the order of battle was almost always behind the infantry and in the two flanks. This sort of formation seemed to have provided the cavalry squadrons with a high

³³The long, heavy lances of the Khurāsānīs in the battle of Zāb were described by Marwān, the last Umayyad Caliph, as being 'as thick as palm trees' (كَأَمَّا النَّخْلُ غَلظًا). Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, p. 266.

³⁴Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, pt. 1, pp. 27, 53.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 53.

³⁶Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, vol. 3, p. 49; Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, vol. 18, p. 253.

³⁷Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 46.

³⁸*Ibid.*, *Bayān*, vol. 3, p. 58.

degree of manoeuvrability on the battlefield. Normally, when the charge commenced, the cavalry squadrons (*karādīs*) would burst forth fiercely and attack the flanks of the enemy's forces in an attempt to break their ranks, which, if successfully accomplished, would eventually cause the collapse of the whole formation of the enemy troops. Best example of such battle formation could be seen in the war between Abū Muslim and 'Abdallāh b. 'Alī in 137/755, as both armies are said to have posted the striking force of their cavalry squadrons on the wings. Six months of sporadic fighting passed and neither army was able to penetrate the flanks of the other side. On 7 Jumādā II/29 February, however, the battle reached a turning point. The armies clashed and fought fiercely. Abū Muslim, who was nearby watching what was happening, tricked 'Abdallāh by instructing al-Ḥasan b. Qaḥṭabah, the commander of the right flank, to strip the right flank and use those troops to reinforce those in the left flank, leaving with him only the bravest fighters. When 'Abdallāh saw this manoeuvre, he stripped most of the left flank of his own army and reinforced the right flank. At this point, Abū Muslim instructed al-Ḥasan to take those who remained with him in the right flank together with the centre of the formation and attack the left flank of 'Abdallāh's army. Al-Ḥasan did so and was able to break 'Abdallāh's left flank, causing the centre and right flank of 'Abdallāh's army to collapse.⁴⁰

³⁹Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 476; Anṣārī, *Tafrīḡ*, p. 42.

⁴⁰Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 477-8; *K. al-'Uyūn*, p. 218.

In addition to their main role in the heart of the battlefield, the ‘Abbāsid cavalymen were also charged with many other military duties, among which were those described in the following subsections.

Reconnaissance

Reconnaissance missions were usually undertaken by small groups of cavalry, known as the *ṭalāʾiʿ* (sing. *ṭalīḥ*) or *naḥḍah* (sing. *naḥḍah*) if they carried out their duties at night.⁴¹ Each scouting party was usually composed of some three to ten men, who were chosen from among the most courageous and wise in their experience of the affairs of war.⁴² Their duty was to go ahead of the marching army to try to obtain information about the enemy’s size and the weapons or tactics that it might use, and to give the first alarm of battle.⁴³ They themselves were not required to involve themselves in any confrontation with the enemy’s forces except in case of extreme necessity. Among the considerations to which the scouting party paid close attention in performing their task were swiftness, mobility, and secrecy. Therefore, we find that writers on military practice at that time such as al-Harthamī (d. first half of 3rd century AH) emphasize that there were certain regulations and instructions that had to be adhered to by the *ṭalāʾiʿ* while carrying out their task.⁴⁴ First, to ensure the

⁴¹ Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, vol. 3, p. 17; Harthamī, *Mukhtaṣar*, pp. 26, 39. For references to the *ṭalāʾiʿ* by al-Ṭabarī during the period of our study, see *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 412, 417, 463; vol. 8, pp. 38, 136, 432, 531.

⁴² Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 417, 441; vol. 9, p. 26; Ibn al-Azraq, *Badāʾiʿ*, vol. 1, p. 63; Harthamī, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 49; ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Kātib, “Risālah”, p. 196; Anṣārī, *Tafrīḥ*, p. 51.

⁴³ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 161; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 240.

⁴⁴ Harthamī, *Mukhtaṣar*, pp. 48-50.

swift dispatch of news and their own fleet movement, the horses of the scouting party needed to be race-horses, sound of back, and securely shod, with not a stubborn or recalcitrant one among them. None of the scouts should wear a coat of mail or carry a shield or anything else that might encumber him. Their arms would be limited to bows, each supplied with between ten and twenty arrows, which had to be deposited in a quiver (*ja'bah*) made of pure leather (*ādam*).⁴⁵ Their bags had to be securely fastened (*samaṭa*)⁴⁶ to the rear of their pack-saddles. As far as was possible, they should make their advance over level, hard ground where there was no dust, as rising dust would catch the attention of the enemy. Further, to avoid all members of the scouting party being seized by the enemy, they should not march close to each other. Instead, enough distance, perhaps as much as a mile, was to be kept between one and another. During their expedition the scouting party should not stray too far into the enemy's vicinity; rather, their advance should not exceed more than two thirds of the distance between their own army and the enemy.

Safeguarding the Army While Encamping

A precautionary procedure that was carefully put in place if it was feared the enemy might launch a sudden attack while the army was in camp was to charge the cavalry corps to station themselves as a band of protection around the camp. During daylight hours this mission would be entrusted to cavalry groups best known as *rabāyā* (sing.

⁴⁵The insistence that the quiver, with its straps and ties, had to be made of leather seems to have been so that it might not occasion any noise during movement, as it would, for example, if it were made of hard felt, metal, or wood. For further notes on the types and characters of quivers used by Muslims, see *Arab Archery: a Book on the Excellence of the Bow and the Arrow*, tr. and ed. Faris & Elmer, (Princeton, 1945) pp. 145-5.

rabīʿah), who would be stationed beyond the army camp in the narrow passes that formed the entranceway to the army. At sunset, however, these groups would be withdrawn and replaced by other groups of patrolling cavalry known as the *darrājah*, who would usually be posted around the camp, in front of the foot guards, in the form of small squadrons (*karādīs*) with a distance of a mile or bowshot between each of them.⁴⁷

Safeguarding the Army During Combat

In addition to the scouting parties' reconnaissance work, they were also charged before the beginning of the combat to control the strategic points surrounding the battlefield such as mountains, pasture lands, and water sources to prevent the enemy from utilizing them as well as to protect the army from any ambush.⁴⁸ In addition, another group of light cavalry (*māniʿah*) would be stationed at the end of the army's right and left flanks. Their duty was to restrain any attempt that the enemy forces might make to turn around toward the army's rear or to penetrate its ranks from the sides.⁴⁹ Also, the army commander always seems to have avoided sending all the cavalry forces into the battlefield at once and to have kept a company of horsemen, known as *al-madad* (reinforcement) or *al-ridʿ* (support), out of the main formation of

⁴⁶ *Samaʿa* is a verb derived from the noun *sumūʿ* (sing. *simʿ*), which are leather thongs attached to the saddle, used to secure the rider's personal belongings. Ibn Sīdah, *al-Mukhaṣṣaṣ*, pt. 6, vol. 2, p. 187.

⁴⁷ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 31, 33; Harthamī, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 32; Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, vol. 3, p. 17.

⁴⁸ Harthamī, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 39. An example of how the enemy was prevented from utilizing natural resources occurred during the war between Abū Muslim and ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAlī in 137/755. After the two armies exchanged encampment sites, Abū Muslim was careful not to let his enemy take advantage of the water sources that were near the camp and so he spoiled them (*ʿawwara*) by throwing decaying carcasses into them. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 477; K. *al-Uyūn*, p. 218.

the army. Their main duty was to fill any gap that might appear within the formation of the army's body in combat time or to reinforce any division that might need more manpower.⁵⁰ Moreover, another group of cavalry would be placed near the rear of the right flank of the army. Their main duty was to attack the camp of the defeated army, making an opportunity for the rest of the cavalry forces to exert full aggression against the enemy by making it impossible for the enemy to reorganize their forces.⁵¹

Ambuscades⁵²

Usually the number of cavalymen participating in ambuscades was large. They would organize themselves into small, separate squadron formations, not far distant from each another, in order to facilitate the reassembling of their forces at the end of the operation.⁵³ Normally, the ambush parties (*kamā'in*, sing. *kamīn*) would be used to carry out a sudden and swift assault. This could be directed to the rear of the enemy's forces in the battlefield⁵⁴ or to their encampment, the aim being to spread

⁴⁹ Harthamī, *Mukhtaṣar*, pp. 34, 39.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 39; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 415-6.

⁵¹ Harthamī, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 39.

⁵² Jāḥiẓ (*Rasā'il*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 53) emphasizes that there was "no ambush, advance-guard or rearguard duty but is always entrusted to the mounted troops."

⁵³ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 58; Harthamī, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 51; Ibn al-Azraq, *al-Badā'i'*, vol. 1, p. 164; Tantum, "Muslim Warfare", p. 198.

⁵⁴ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 453.

disarray and panic as well as to capture some of their men who would reveal information about their army.⁵⁵

3.1.2 The Infantry

Although cavalry corps constituted both the backbone and the bulk of the 'Abbāsid fighting forces, the infantry troops (*rājilūn* or *rajjālah*) remained throughout the first century of 'Abbāsid rule the next most indispensable element within the structure of the army. Their fundamental role is not only reflected in the fact that the 'Abbāsids hardly ever entered a war without them, but, most important, by the fact that at most times it was upon them that the burden of the initial and direct blow with the enemy forces rested. This helps to explain one of the common fighting tactics of the 'Abbāsids. That is to say, since the early days of their revolution, in most of the battles that they fought with their enemies, the 'Abbāsid forces were not the side who launched the first assault. Instead, they generally choose to wait and incite their enemies in one way or another to make the initial charge. Their aim in this seems not only to have been to test the strength of their enemy but, more important, to drain as much of the enemy's energy as possible before the 'Abbāsid cavalry commenced their charge.⁵⁶ This tactic always seems to have required the placing of the foot-soldiers, armed with long lances and shields, in the front line of the army formation,

⁵⁵ As an example, we may cite the military campaign at 'Ammūriyyah in 223/837. On that occasion, at the request of Caliph al-Mu'taṣim, Ashnās, the 'Abbāsid commander, sent one of his field commanders with 200 cavalry as an ambush party to seek out a man from the Byzantines who could supply them with information regarding the Byzantine Emperor and his army. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 58-60.

mostly in straight lines free of any gap between one foot-soldier and another. Just behind them stood the archers, whilst at the back and in the flanks were posted the cavalry.⁵⁷ When the enemy started their attack, the infantry would crouch on one knee, keeping the heads of their long lances close to the ground. As soon as the enemy's cavalry came within range of the archers' arrows, the latter would deliver a tremendous volley of arrows to inflict as much injury as possible upon the enemy forces. Before the enemy's cavalry could approach the army lines, the infantry would at this point plant their lances in front of them with their points tilted upward toward the enemy, aiming by this to neutralize the effectiveness of the enemy's cavalry whether by injuring or by startling away their horses.⁵⁸ As soon as the enemy's attacking thrust had been repulsed by the infantry, the cavalry squadrons would then burst forth either through breaks in the lines or through the flanks of the army, and charge at the advancing enemy, who, by this point, would have expended a considerable amount of their energy.⁵⁹

The importance and the effective role played by the foot-soldiers in the early 'Abbāsīd armies again came to the fore when the 'Abbāsīd forces were faced by enemies whose forces were composed of infantry. In fact, on many occasions, as for instance in the 'Alid rebellion in Madīnah in 145/763, it was with infantry foes that the 'Abbāsīds had to deal. In these circumstances the 'Abbāsīd commanders seem to

⁵⁶One example of provoking the enemy to start the initial charge is well illustrated during the Zāb battle. See Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 129; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 433.

⁵⁷Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 129; Nicolle & McBride, *Armies*, p. 12; Parry, "Warfare", p. 848.

⁵⁸Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 435; vol. 8, p. 416; Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 129; *K. al-'Uyūn*, p. 326; Harthamī, *Mukhtaṣar*, pp. 45-6; Anṣārī, *Tafrīḡ*, p. 43.

have fully realized the disadvantage of deploying their horsemen. Thus, their foot-soldiers had to carry out the main fighting, leaving the cavalry troops with the primary mission of pursuing the retreating enemy.⁶⁰ Likewise, the key role of the infantry became obvious when the 'Abbāsids had to face their enemy on very difficult terrain where it was at many points unsuitable to use mounted forces. Such cases occurred with the Zutt rebellion in the marshland of southern Iraq and when opposing the Khurramiyyah forces in the rugged mountains and valleys of Armenia and Adharbayjān.⁶¹

Besides the long lance, sword, bow, and shield, the 'Abbāsīd infantrymen armed themselves with other weapons, many of which were of Persian origin. Among those were the mace (*jurzah*),⁶² the iron club (*'amūd*),⁶³ the battle-axe (*ṭabarazm*),⁶⁴ the dagger (*khanjar*),⁶⁵ and the wooden club (*kāfir kūbāt*).⁶⁶ These were used in hand-to-hand fighting, especially among the Khurāsānī troops.⁶⁷ 'Abbāsīd infantrymen also used, for the first time in Muslim armies, the sling (*miqlā'* or *mikhlāh*), which

⁵⁹ Ibn al-Azraq, *Badā'i'*, vol. 1, p. 159; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 416.

⁶⁰ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 583-4.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 9, pp. 8, 25, 30, 32-3; Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, p. 403; *K. al-'Uyūn*, p. 387.

⁶² Dhahabī, *Siyar*, vol. 7, p. 128; Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 19; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 526-7.

⁶³ Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, p. 224; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 299; Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 20; Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 26; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 467; vol. 8, p. 194.

⁶⁴ Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 20; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 467.

⁶⁵ Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, pt. 1, pp. 20, 26.

⁶⁶ Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, p. 276; Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, p. 361; Azdī, *Tārīkh*, pp. 132, 139; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 308-10; Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 20.

⁶⁷ Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, pt. 1, pp. 19-20; *idem.*, *Bayān*, vol. 3, p. 115; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, vol. 7, p. 128; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 467.

was used to hurl stones against the enemy.⁶⁸ This implement proved, when used in battle, that it could kill, or at least knock an enemy horseman off his horse.⁶⁹

Besides their fighting role on the battlefield, foot-soldiers also had to share other common responsibilities with the cavalry. The chief of these was guarding the army encampment and controlling the strategic high points surrounding it.⁷⁰ It seems possible to classify 'Abbāsid foot-soldiers carrying out such duties into two categories according to the names that they were known by and their positions. Those who performed guard duty within the army encampment or outside it within a close circuit were simply called *ḥurrās* or '*askar*'. The circle of their guard duty was understandably smaller than that of the mounted guards.⁷¹ Meanwhile, those posted on mountain tops as watchmen were known as *kūhbāniyyah*⁷² or *dayādibah*.⁷³

⁶⁸Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 587.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 458; K. al-'Uyūn, p. 334; Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, p. 414. For more information on the sling as a weapon, see Rehatsek, "Notes", p. 219.

⁷⁰Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 32-3.

⁷¹Ḥarthamī, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 32; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 31.

⁷²Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 593; vol. 9, pp. 24, 29-30, 34, 46-47; Ibn Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, pp. 29-30. According to Bosworth (*Ṭabarī*, vol. 33, p. 38, n. 138, referring to Herzfeld, *Samarra*, p. 141, n. 4), 'The term stems from Middle Persian *kōhbān* < Old Persian *kaufa-pāna* "mountain guard, watcher'. While Shaban (*A New Interpretation*, vol. 2, pp. 66-7) believes that the *kūhbāniyyah*, mentioned in connection with the war with Bābak in 220/836, were from al-Afshīn's native homeland of Ushrūsanah, Bosworth (*Ṭabarī*, vol. 33, p. 38) suggests that they might have been recruited on the spot in Adharbayjān. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the *kūhbāniyyah* are mentioned as one of the 'Abbāsid infantry corps as early as 145/763 during the war with the 'Alids in Madīnah, during which their duty was also associated with controlling the mountain. See Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 593.

⁷³Jāhiz, *Bayān*, vol. 3, p. 189; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 52; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 1, p. 521; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, p. 303, s.v. "ayyn"; al-Rāzī, *Mukhtār*, p. 195, s.v. "ayyn". According to Bosworth (*Ṭabarī*, vol. 33, p. 85), *dayādibah* is an Arabicization of the Persian plural word *dāda-bān*. Ibn al-'Amrī (d. 757/1556) devotes a long section in his book *Kitāb al-Ḥiyāl fī al-Ḥurūb* (manuscript, Ahmad III, Topkap Saray: Istanbul, pp. 223-6), to a discussion of the physical characteristics and the different skills that the *dayādibah* had to have to be able to carry out such an important task.

One of the common military practices related to the infantry forces was for their officers to be provided with mounts at the battlefield.⁷⁴ Most likely, this was to facilitate their movement between the divisions of their men in the battlefield both to deliver instructions as well as to maintain full control over them.

When a long distance was to be travelled, 'Abbāsīd foot-soldiers were usually provided with horses, camels, or mules.⁷⁵ However, if passage was made by water, perhaps a river, the foot-soldiers would be loaded into boats while the horsemen would march alongside on the bank.⁷⁶

3.1.3 Archers

Al-rumāh and *al-nāshibah* were the most common Arabic terms that were applied to those soldiers whose principal arms were bows and arrows. Their role in combat was essential, as the fighting would usually start with a heavy salvo of arrows between the two armies with the purpose of inflicting as many injuries as possible on the opposing side before the main troops clashed with each other.⁷⁷

Though we know little about the archers in pre-Islamic times, or indeed the types of bows that they used, still there are certain deductions that can be drawn from the

⁷⁴Jāhīz, *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 54; Harthamī, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 65.

⁷⁵Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 432; Ali, *Short History*, p. 440.

⁷⁶Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 846.

⁷⁷Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 406; Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 129; Basawī, *al-Ma'rifah*, vol. 3, p. 452.

sparse information available, which is largely to be found in poetic literature.⁷⁸ Among these is the conclusion that although the Arabs in pre-Islamic times knew the importance of the bow as an implement of war and considered an accomplished person to be one who had mastered the skills of swimming, writing, and archery,⁷⁹ there is evidence that the bow was not widely used in comparison with the sword and lance. Instead, its use as a weapon of war had been limited to certain tribal groups, amongst whom was that of Tamīm.⁸⁰

With the rise of Islam, however, emphasis on using the bow and mastering its skills reached their zenith. This was because it had a strong basis in the new faith, which connected military strength in fighting against the unbelievers with two important implements of war: the horse and the bow. Repeating the statement three times, the Prophet interprets the word *quwwah* within the Quranic verse “Make ready against them whatsoever force you are able to gather”⁸¹ as “the force of archery (*ramy*)”.⁸² Furthermore, it is narrated that the Prophet preferred the Muslims to be archers rather than cavalymen.⁸³ It is also narrated that the bow was never mentioned before the

⁷⁸For some of the poets who describe the use of bows in pre-Islamic times, see Dīnawarī, *Kitāb al-Ma‘ānī al-Kabīr fī Abyāt al-Ma‘ānī*, vol. 2, pp. 1039-70.

⁷⁹Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 3, p. 604.

⁸⁰Al-Ḥasan b. ‘Abdallāh, *Āthār al-Uwal fī trīb al-Duwal*, p. 167-68; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 3, p. 540; *EF*², s.v. “Kaws”.

⁸¹“وأعدو لهم ما استطعتم من قوة” . Qur’ān, 8: 60.

⁸²“ألا أن القوة الرمي، ألا أن القوة الرمي، ألا أن القوة الرمي” Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, vol. 3, p. 13; Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān*, vol. 10, p. 30.

⁸³Shaybānī, *Kitāb al-Siyar*, vol. 1, p. 112; Ibn al-Qayyim, *Furūsiyyah*, p. 9.

Prophet without his saying, “There is no weapon excelling it in goodness.”⁸⁴ All these *ḥadīths*, and many others, strongly urge Muslims to master the use of the bow. In reality, however, it seems that mastering this type of weapon as a prime implement of war took a while before Muslims really reached the proficient stage. In all the battles that Muslims fought during the time of the Prophet, there was only one battle in which archers really had to play a vital role in spite of their scanty numbers.⁸⁵

With the Muslims’ expansion of their conquests beyond the confines of Jazīrah, they became increasingly aware of the importance of the role of the bow in combat. This awareness took root when they came face to face with the well-drilled troops of the Byzantines and, more importantly, with the Persians, who were renowned for their archery and were considered masters of this art.⁸⁶ In addition, Muslims were required to face new methods of combat, for example, in the realm of siege warfare, in troop formation, and in the battlefield the use of unfamiliar tools of war such as elephants.⁸⁷ In spite of what is narrated about the role of Muslim archers during the siege of Anbār (12/633), in which 1,000 of the defenders’ eyes were lost, the truth of the matter is that neither the number of Muslim archers nor their skills at that time

⁸⁴ “ما سبقها سلاح قط إلى الخير”. Shaybānī, *Kitāb al-Siyar*, vol. 1, p. 112; Nūwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, vol. 6, p. 22.

⁸⁵ This was in the battle of Uḥad in 3/625, in which, as it is reported, out of the 700 Muslims who took part, there were only 50 who were familiar with the use of the bow. The most famous amongst them was Sa’d b. Abī Waqqāṣ, who effectively used his great skill in archery in defence of the Prophet. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 416; al-Nasā’ī, *Faḍā’il al-Ṣaḥābah*, pt. 2, p. 34; Tirmidhī, *al-Jām’ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 5, p. 650; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 516.

⁸⁶ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 3, p. 537; Nicolle, “Introduction”, p. 163.

were comparable with those of their foes in open combat.⁸⁸ This was obvious, for example, in the battle of Qādisiyyah in 14/635 and against the Nubians, who used the pupils of the Muslims' eyes as targets for their arrows.⁸⁹

The first real indications of the emergence of the archers as a distinct regiment within the Islamic armies are linked with the defection of some of the non-Arab auxiliary forces to the Muslim side. Among the auxiliary forces that entered into a confederacy with the Arabs was the Asāwirah, who were known for their great skill in the use of the bow.⁹⁰ Another group that was also known for their skill in the bow were the Bukhāriyyah, who were brought by 'Ubaydallāh b. Ziyād from Bukhārā in 54/674 and later settled in Baṣrah, where they came to be known as Bukhāriyyat Ibn Ziyād.⁹¹ Their archery skills were put into use when they were sent to Yamāmah in order to suppress various dissident groups in the region.⁹²

It is worth noting, however, that although these non-Arab groups had formed the core of the archers in the Syrian army operating in central provinces, neither their small number nor the type of warfare practised by the Arab rebel forces, including the

⁸⁷Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 3, pp. 537, 540; Ibn al-Azraq, *Badā'i*, vol. 2, p. 160.

⁸⁸It is reported, for example, that Hishām b. 'Utbah, one of the sub-commanders at the battle of Qādisiyyah, wanted to shoot at the enemy while he was sitting on his horseback. Unfortunately, instead of doing so, he mistakenly shot his horse's ear. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 3, pp. 552-3.

⁸⁹Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 260, 283; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 3, p. 525; vol. 4, p. 111; Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 1, p. 352; Abū Yūsuf, *Kharāj*, p. 31.

⁹⁰Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 4, p. 89; vol. 5, p. 519; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 366-7. For details of the Asāwirah, see al-'Alī, *Tanzīmāt*, p. 69; Ayalon, "Remarks", p. 45.

⁹¹Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 507; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 5, p. 298.

⁹²Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *al-Iqd*, vol. 1, p. 195; Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyūn al-Akhbār*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 132.

Khārijites among others, enabled the Syrian army to use them in all its campaigns. Instead, their use seemed to have been mostly confined to those military operations that took place on a restricted battlefield, such as inside a city and only when the army's position was desperate. During the rebellion of 'Alī b. Zayd in Kūfah in 122/739, the rebel force is said to have inflicted heavy casualties among the Syrian forces at the beginning of the hostilities. It was only at this critical point that the Syrian commander asked for reinforcement by archery divisions. The Bukhāriyyah and Qīqāniyyah⁹³ were sent to the battlefield and it was owing to their skill in archery that the battle was turned around and the rebel forces were defeated.⁹⁴

With the 'Abbāsids, however, the archery divisions became clearly recognizable units within the main formations of the their armies. While facing the army of Ibn Ḍubārah in 131/749, the commander-in-chief, Qaḥṭabah, is said to have instructed his archers to target the enemy's horses. This onslaught was apparently sufficient to cause the Syrian army to lose their nerve and retreat in a disorganized manner, leaving the heart of the army open to attack by 'Abbāsīd forces, which offensive was soon concluded with the death of the Syrian commander-in-chief.⁹⁵ In the battle of Zāb, the archers were lined up in the second row just behind the infantry troops.⁹⁶

Their presence was also apparent amongst the forces facing the 'Alid rebellions in

⁹³A renowned regiment of archers from Qīqān province in Sind at the edge of the boundary with Khurāsān. Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 531; Hillenbrand, *The History of Ṭabarī*, vol. 26, p. 41.

⁹⁴'Alī b. Zayd is said to have died the next day in consequence of an arrow wound in his forehead. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 186; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 3, p. 424.

⁹⁵Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 406.

Madīnah and Baṣrah (145/763), in which, tellingly, both of the ‘Alid brothers are said to have been killed by arrows.⁹⁷ In 138/756, the archers among the Marwaziyyah troops, the followers of Khāzim b. Khuzaymah, must take the credit for having saved their forces from certain defeat by turning the battle around. They showered the rebel forces with arrows, inflicting heavy casualties upon them, which was crowned by the death of their leader, al-Mulabbad b. Ḥarmalah al-Shaybānī, and the defeat of his supporters.⁹⁸ In like manner, in 160/777, it was only by use of the Turkish archers that the ‘Abbāsids were able to put an end to the Khārijite rebellion in Jazīrah under the leadership of ‘Abd al-Sallām al-Yashkurī, who had defeated many ‘Abbāsīd armies prior to this battle.⁹⁹ In the war with the Khurramiyyah, al-Afshīn used his archery divisions to clear the mountain tops of the enemy.¹⁰⁰

The defensive character that distinguished the warfare of the ‘Abbāsīd army made the role of the archery divisions essential. However, another factor contributing to the centrality of the archery divisions in the ‘Abbāsīd army was the traditions prevailing in Khurāsān, the homeland of many of the ‘Abbāsīd troops. In Iran and, more precisely, in Khurāsān, archery was not only a long-standing tradition among the Persians but also amongst the Arabs who had been serving in those regions since

⁹⁶ Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 129; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 433.

⁹⁷ *K. al-‘Uyūn*, pp. 243, 353; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. , 587, 635.

⁹⁸ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 498-9.

⁹⁹ Ibn Khayyāt, *Tārīkh*, p. 361. Ṭabarī (*Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 142), however, dates the defeat of al-Yashkurī in 162/779.

¹⁰⁰ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 34, 37, 40, 42-3.

the time of Qutaybah b. Muslim.¹⁰¹ The archery divisions within the ‘Abbāsid armies were later enhanced by the introduction of Turks, who were also well renowned for their archery skills. But, in contrast to the Arabs, amongst whom the bow was essentially an infantry weapon, the Turks were accustomed to use of the bow on horseback. Their astonishing skills as mounted archers is well documented by al-Jāḥiẓ, who says:

Neither the Khārijites nor the Bedouins [A‘rāb] are famous for their prowess as mounted bowmen. But the Turk will hit from his saddle an animal, a bird, a target, a man, a couching animal, a marker post or a bird of prey stooping on its quarry... The Turk does not wheel around like the Khurāsānī, indeed if he turns his horse’s head it is deadly poison and certain death, for he aims his arrow as accurately behind him as he does in front of him.¹⁰²

3.1.4 Siege-Engineers

For making open and direct attacks on fortresses and stronghold cities, the ‘Abbāsid armies carried with them many varieties of siege-machinery. The most effective amongst those were the mangonel (*manjanīq*, pl. *manājiq*) and the catapult (*‘arrādah*, pl. *‘arrādāt*), which was the smaller and lighter of the two types of ballista machine. These hurling machines were constructed and operated by a select staff of engineers possibly known as the *manjanīqiyyūn* (sing. *manjanīqī*). The Arabs were acquainted with the use of mangonels as siege-machines since pre-Islamic times. According to al-Jāḥiẓ, Judhaymah b. Mālīk, the king of Ḥīrah, was the first

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 472.

¹⁰² Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā’il*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 45-6 (English translation quoted from Pellat, *Life*, p. 93). Regarding the techniques used to shoot from horseback, see Latham & Paterson, “Archery in the Land of Eastern Islam”, In *Islamic Arms and Armour*, ed. Elgood (London, 1979), pp. 78-88.

Arab to employ them.¹⁰³ In Islamic times, the Muslims used them in their military campaigns as early as the time of the Prophet. Nonetheless, their use in this early period was on a very limited scale and is, in fact, only mentioned during the Muslim siege of the Thaḳīf tribe in Ṭā'if in 8/630.¹⁰⁴ With the expansion of the Islamic operations beyond the confines of the Arabian Peninsula, the Muslim armies increasingly employed mangonels in their warfare as they were faced with the Persians' and Byzantines' stubborn defence in Iraq and Syria. Thus, they used them in the siege of Damascus (13/634) and against the city of Buhr-sīr¹⁰⁵ (16/637), where the Muslims are said to have employed more than twenty mangonels.¹⁰⁶

By the time of the Umayyads, the use of hurling engines not only became common in attacks made against fortifications, but they were now refined and brought to a new peak of perfection. At the siege of Daybul in Sind in 92/712, Muḥammad b. Qāsim used a gigantic mangonel which was called *al-'Arūs* (the Bride). It was operated by no less than five hundred persons and was under the control of a very skilled operator, who took charge of the aiming and shooting.¹⁰⁷ In one of his military campaigns in Khurāsān in 91/710, Qutaybah b. Muslim is also reported to have employed a huge mangonel, which he called *al-Faḥjā'* (the Wide-Legged).¹⁰⁸ The

¹⁰³ Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, vol. 1, p. 362.

¹⁰⁴ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, vol. 5, p. 155; Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, p. 158; Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. 1, pp. 366-7; *ibid.*, *Futūḥ*, p. 66.

¹⁰⁵ One of the towns of the Sawād near al-Madā'in. Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 1, p. 515.

¹⁰⁶ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 4, p. 6.

¹⁰⁷ Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 535; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 4, p. 537.

¹⁰⁸ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 6, p. 463; *El*², s.v. "Ḥiṣār".

last occasion on which the Umayyads are reported to have used mangonels was in the siege laid against Sa 'īd b. Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik in Ḥimṣ in 127/744, when Marwān b. Muḥammad set up more than eighty mangonels and bombarded the city by day and night.¹⁰⁹

The 'Abbāsids also used hurling engines as early as the revolutionary period. Thus, Qaḥṭabah is said to have used mangonels during his siege of Nahāwand, as did also his son, al-Ḥasan, against the Syrian forces besieged inside Wāsiṭ in 132/749.¹¹⁰ Later, the 'Abbāsīd forces commanded by al-'Abbās b. Muḥammad are reported to have used mangonels in their conquest of the city of Kamakh in 149/766.¹¹¹

It is worth noting, however, that the 'Abbāsids were innovative in their use of the mangonel in that they employed a more complex type of projectile, which caused much greater devastation than was achieved with the use of stones; that is to say, they used flaming naphtha.¹¹² The first occasion when such projectiles were used by the 'Abbāsids was during the siege of Heraclea in 190/806, when Hārūn al-Rashīd, who was in command, instructed his men to place sulphur and naphtha with the stones. The whole was wrapped up with tow and placed into the holder, where it was then ignited and hurled against the wall, to which it clung, so that the wall would

¹⁰⁹Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7. p. 326.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 407, 451.

¹¹¹Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 220.

¹¹²Bosworth, "Armies", p. 207; *El*², s.v. "Ḥiṣār".

crack with the heat.¹¹³ To compose and use naphtha missiles against the enemy and also to deal with them when used against Muslims, a special corps known as the *naffātūn* (naphtha-hurlers) was employed.¹¹⁴ During the campaign against Heraclea, the ‘Abbāsid forces found their way barred by the Byzantine Emperor, Nicephorus, who instructed his forces to cut down trees across the road and set them on fire. The *naffātūn*, who wore special fire-proof clothing and were led by Muḥammad b. Yazīd b. Mazyad al-Shaybānī, burst through the burning timber and succeeded in making a safe passage for the rest of the army.¹¹⁵ The *naffātūn* are also mentioned as having been employed by al-Mu‘taṣim’s commander, al-Afshīn, against the Khurramiyyah, especially in the siege of Bābak’s stronghold of al-Badhdh.¹¹⁶ At the siege of Baghdad, during the civil war, both rivals used all types of mangonels extensively and indiscriminately.¹¹⁷ They were used from land positions as well as from ships in

¹¹³ Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, vol. 18, p. 253.

¹¹⁴ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 40, 41, 44; K. al-‘Uyūn, p. 386; Levy, *Social Structure*, p. 439; Bosworth, “Armies”, p. 207; Samadī, “Some Aspects”, p. 131.

¹¹⁵ Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, vol. 18, p. 274.

¹¹⁶ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 40-1, 44; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 32; K. al-‘Uyūn, p. 386.

¹¹⁷ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 445-7, 451-2, 455, 457, 464, 474, 478, 490, 497; Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, p. 399; Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, p. 411; K. al-‘Uyūn, p. 332.

the middle of the Tigris, and their rocks and fire brought the city into complete devastation, which was described by contemporary poets.¹¹⁸

Against the enemy, mangonels were also used successfully in the siege of ‘Ammūriyyah in 223/837. Al-Mu‘taṣim, who was in command, instructed his engineers to build strong, powerful mangonels. Each one was manned by four people and was moved about by being placed on a platform resting on a wheeled cart. When the siege started, al-Mu‘taṣim ordered his men to gather all the mangonels in his camp into one place and thus concentrate their bombardment against a particular spot in the city’s wall perceived to be the weakest point. Despite the persistent attempts of the defenders to protect the wall by placing over it a great barrier of timber planks, each lapped over another and covered with pack-saddles (*barādhi*), their efforts came to an end as the wall split open under the heavy bombardment of the ‘Abbāsids’ mangonels.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 445-7, 454, 457, 463-4, 477, 500-6; Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, pp. 412-4. The most renowned hurler with the mangonel at the siege of Baghdad was a man called al-Samarqandī. He fought on the side of al-Amīn and, on account of his skill in shooting, he is described as ‘a marksman whose stone did not miss’. As to his fate after the end of the war, it is reported that the people of Baghdad, who had suffered from his stones, avenged themselves upon him by crucifying him alive before showering him with arrows and stones and continuing to do so even after his death. Finally, his body was set on fire and what remained of him was eaten of by dogs. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 447, 497-8.

¹¹⁹Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 63-5; K. al-‘Uyūn, p. 392; Miskawayh, *Tajārib*, p. 490; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 43; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 315. A great variety of hurling machines came to be used by the Muslims in later periods. For more information on the different types of hurling engines and projectiles, see Arnbaghā al-Zardhkāsh (d. 867/1462), *al-Anīq fī al-Manājiq*, ed. Aḥsān Hindī (Damascus, 1985). Also, see Cahen’s “Un traité d’armurerie” on a work on the art of war by the Ayyubid author Marḍī al-Ṭarsūsī, including important illustrations.

Another engine of siege, which the ‘Abbāsid forces used for direct assault on city walls, was the *dabbābah*.¹²⁰ This was a movable wooden tower of several stories, on each of which was stationed a number of men. After the *dabbābah* had been pushed to the foot of the wall, the miners (*naqqābūn*), stationed on the lower storeys and armed with picks and drills, would commence their work of boring into the wall or scaling it. Meanwhile, the men on the upper levels, armed with bows and arrows, would both protect their own men and inflict as many casualties as possible upon the defenders on the walls.¹²¹ At the siege of ‘Ammūriyyah, al-Mu‘taṣim is said to have instructed his engineers to erect a number of large *dabābbāt*, each one capable of holding ten men inside it. To be able to roll them over the defensive trench surrounding the city, sheepskins stuffed with earth were used to fill in part of the trench.¹²²

3.1.5 Pioneer and Labour Corps

During the early days of the Islamic army, soldiers would engage ancillary workers in duties of a non-military nature before, after, and during the breaks in the actual fighting, as for example in the Battle of the Ditch in 6/628, when they alternated their primary battle duties with the digging of the ditch.¹²³ With the spread of the

¹²⁰ Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 220.

¹²¹ Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 309; Levy, *Social Structure*, p. 440; Bosworth, “Armies”, p. 207; Zaky, “al-Silāḥ”, p. 24.

¹²² Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 65; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, pp. 43-4; *K. al-‘Uyūn*, p. 392; Miskawayh, *Tajārib*, p. 491; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 315.

¹²³ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 568; Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, vol. 4, p. 168; Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 50; Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, p. 66.

conquests and the abundance of Muslim converts, especially skilful craftsmen from among the people of the conquered lands, groups of laborers (*fa'alah*)¹²⁴ started to join the Islamic armies.¹²⁵ Those builders, carpenters, blacksmiths, and other artisans would support the army by engaging in activities such as making and paving roads, building and repairing bridges, searching for and digging wells, and digging or filling in ditches. One of the campaigns that illustrates the vital role of the *fa'alah* occurred during the war with Bābak. In a very harsh and hostile terrain, the *fa'alah* were required at all stages to provide defensive measures for the army. They would transport rocks to fortify mountain roads used by the troops, erect defence posts on mountain tops for guards, dig trenches around camps and roads to prevent easy entry by the enemy, and fill in pits dug by their foes to hinder the movement of 'Abbāsid cavalry.¹²⁶

Another of the duties committed to the *fa'alah* was that of building, or at other times demolishing, fortresses. When Caliph al-Manṣūr wanted to build the frontier strongholds of Malatyah and Kamkh, *fa'alah* were dispatched from all over the

¹²⁴Other names were also attached to these workmen. While they were known in Egypt as *qadāliyyah*, *kilghariyyah* seems to have been the common name for them in Adharbayjān and Armenia. Al-Kindī, *Wulāh*, p. 157; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 32.

¹²⁵Dīnawarī, *Akhhbār*, p. 116; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 4, p. 32; Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 2, p. 337.

¹²⁶Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 32, 43; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 29.

Islamic territories to take part in the construction.¹²⁷ The same procedure was repeated during the construction of Ṭuwānah in 218/834.¹²⁸

3.1.6 The Army Police Force

There was always a small elite body of troops attached to the army in all its military operations. These were known as *Shurṭat al-‘Askar* or *Jund al-Shuraṭ* and their main duty was to maintain order within the ranks of the army by, for example, restraining crime, investigating offences said to have been committed, and tracking down spies or infiltrators, who might make their way among the ranks of the army.¹²⁹

Besides being known as *Ṣāhib al-Shuraṭ* (or *Shurṭah*), the officer of the army in charge of this police force was also known as *al-Ḥāshir*.¹³⁰ He acquired this title as he and his men were responsible during marches to follow up the army and urge forwards (*ḥashara*) any lingering soldiers to catch up with the rest of the army. Likewise, in combat, they would be stationed at the rear of the army to prevent any desertion attempts that might occur within the ranks of the soldiers or their retreating without clear orders from the army commander.¹³¹ Sometimes, they would have very strict instructions to put to death any deserter, reluctant soldier, or trouble-

¹²⁷ Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 223; Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 372.

¹²⁸ Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 223; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 631.

¹²⁹ Akhbār, p. 279; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 366.

¹³⁰ Harthamī, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 29; Shaybānī, *Siyar*, vol. 1, p. 214.

¹³¹ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 415.

maker so that they would be examples for others.¹³² Executing punishments on guilty soldiers was also one of the functions of the police force. When ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Alī decided to get rid of the Khurāsānīs in his army, fearing that they might desert to the side of Abū Muslim when the warfare started, he charged his chief of police, Ḥayyāsh b. Ḥabīb, with the mission of putting them to death.¹³³ In addition, as members of the police force were always chosen from amongst the most courageous and loyal members of the army, the commander sometimes, especially when the troops’ morality was low, might charge them with the mission of launching the initial attack on the enemy.¹³⁴

3.2 The Support Services

In addition to the main units of the army, there were certain functions that were carried out by specially appointed individuals or small groups. Miscellaneous texts contain the terms used to describe some of these functions and officers.

In most of its military campaigns, the ‘Abbāsīd army was accompanied by guides (*adillā*’, sing. *dalīl*), whose main duty was to guide the army along its route. For this reason, they had to have knowledge of the physical geography of the land, the location of wells, and the route that the army needed to take to reach its intended

¹³²*Ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 368; Dīnawarī, *Akhhbār*, p. 396. It was al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf who was the first to impose such harsh punishment on deserters and reluctant fighters. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 6, p. 207; Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, p. 136.

¹³³Basawī, *Ma‘rifah*, vol. 1, p. 119; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 481; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 7, p. 67.

¹³⁴Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 414.

destination.¹³⁵ We know, for example, that when the ‘Abbāsid army was dispatched in a campaign against the Iṣḥabhadh in Ṭabaristān in 141/759, it was accompanied by ‘Umar b. al-‘Alā’, who is said to have been the person most knowledgeable of the land of Ṭabaristān.¹³⁶ Likewise, before sending his army to face the ‘Alid rebellion in Madīnah in 145/763, al-Manṣūr appointed Ibn al-Aṣamm to guide the army during its march as well as to choose the best sites for the army encampments.¹³⁷ To obtain the most reliable local knowledge of the land, the commanders would exchange one *dalīl* for another as they travelled from one stage to the next.¹³⁸ When the army was divided into separate divisions, each division was headed by a single *dalīl* or sometimes more than one.¹³⁹ When the army had to fight outside or on the edge of Muslim territory, non-Muslims were generally employed as *adillā’* in return for money, exemption from tribute, or to gain their freedom if they were captives.¹⁴⁰ In fact, in recognition of the *dalīl*’s importance, the commander would sometimes award him a portion from the booty before it was divided into fifths.¹⁴¹ Some of the truce agreements with non-Muslim foes also stipulated that the latter provide the Muslim forces with guides. For example, one of the conditions of the peace treaty made between Hārūn al-Rashīd and the Byzantine Empress Irene in 165/782 was

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 9, p. 59.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 510; *K. al-‘Uyūn*, p. 229.

¹³⁷ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 583.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 412-3.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 9, p. 58; *K. al-‘Uyūn*, p. 486.

¹⁴⁰ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 60; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 42; Miskawayh, *Tajārib*, p. 487.

¹⁴¹ Ibn Sallām, *Amwāl*, p. 333.

that the latter should pay the tribute (*jizyah*) for three years and provide the ‘Abbāsīd forces with guides on their return journey home.¹⁴²

During operations in the field, the ‘Abbāsīd army was accompanied by a staff of physicians (*aṭibbā’*, sing. *ṭabīb*). These people were not just responsible for treating soldiers for the wounds they received in the battlefield, but also for dealing with illnesses and injuries that the troops might succumb to during marches, as there were usually many sore feet after marching in very rugged highlands.¹⁴³ In addition to the physicians, the army was also accompanied by a considerable number of private chemists (*ṣayādilah*, sing. *ṣaydalī*), who would find in these military expeditions a very flourishing and profitable market to sell their shop-made medicines, many of which were derived from Indian and Greek medicines.¹⁴⁴ However, because of the fear of fraud amongst these chemists and the need for genuine and effective medicines, army commanders took care from time to time to examine the sincerity and competence of these chemists accompanying the army. Abū Zakariyā al-Ṭayfūrī, a famous physician of that time, reports that while he accompanied the army during the war with Bābak, the ‘Abbāsīd commander-in-chief, al-Afshīn, wanted to examine the chemists in his army. He therefore arbitrarily chose twenty terms with

¹⁴²Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 152; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 248; Ibn al-‘Ibrī, *Tārīkh*, p. 218.

¹⁴³Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 39; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 32.

no connection to medicine and asked one of his men to take these terms with a sum of money around the chemists asking if such medicines were available. The account concludes by stating that those who denied their knowledge of such medicines were allowed to stay, while those who took the money and assured the agent of their possession of these medicines were ordered to leave the camp immediately, under threat that the next day any of them who remained would be put to death.¹⁴⁵

The field hospital (*al-bīmāristān al-sayyār*) was well supplied and to it were attached ambulances for the wounded in the shape of litters (*maḥāmīl*, sing. *maḥmil*) that were carried by camels in the flat lands and by mules in the rugged mountains.¹⁴⁶

In the course of the long time spent in marching, camping, and fighting, it was natural that problems would arise between members of the army. In view of this, a number of judges (*quḍāh*, sing. *qāḍī*) would accompany the armies to determine the proper solution of these problems according to Islamic law (*Sharīʿah*).¹⁴⁷ Another function of the *Qāḍī al-Jund* was to supervise the booty and ensure its fair

¹⁴⁴Most of the chemists and physicians who served in Baghdad in that period were non-Arabs, the majority being Persian Christians or Indians. In fact, the people of Baghdad preferred non-Muslim chemists and physicians over Muslim practitioners. In this regard al-Jāḥiẓ tells an interesting story of a starving Muslim physician in Baghdad who had no clients because, as al-Jāḥiẓ explains, 'the physician had a non-Christian name, he wore a white cotton cloak instead of a black silk one, and he did not speak the language of Jūndī-Shāpūr' (Dols, "Origin", p. 383; Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-Bukhālā*, p. 160 [Arabic original]).

¹⁴⁵Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 255; Ibn al-ʿIbrī, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 244.

¹⁴⁶Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 39, 41; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 32; Miskawayh, *Tajārib*, pp. 482-3.

¹⁴⁷*Akḥbār*, p. 280; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 366; vol. 8, p. 143; Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol. 9, p. 123.

distribution.¹⁴⁸ In some cases, some *qāḍīs*, especially those who possessed martial skills, might also be given purely military tasks such as commanding the troops. Among those mentioned in this connection was the renowned ‘Abbāsīd *qāḍī*, Yaḥyā b. Aktham, who led several summer expeditions against the Byzantines during the reign of al-Ma’mūn.¹⁴⁹

The troops were not allowed to take any booty directly for themselves. Instead, the booty had to be collected and handed to an officer commonly referred to as the *Ṣāḥib al-Aqbāḍ* (or al-*Qābiḍ*), who, after the fighting, would hand it in turn to the *Ṣāḥib al-Maqāsīm*. This last person would divide the booty into fifths (*akhmās*). He then gave four fifths to agents (*umanāʾ*, sing. *amīn*) to be distributed amongst the troops, while the remaining fifth would be handed to the commander so that he could send it to the Caliph, who would put it into the Treasury (*Bayt al-Māl*).¹⁵⁰

The *muyyār* (sing. *māʾir*) were the people who carried the food, prepared it, and served it to the troops,¹⁵¹ while the *saqāyūn* (sing. *saqī*) or *aṣḥāb al-sharāb* were responsible for supplying the fighters with water (*siqāyah*).¹⁵² Sometimes the *saqāyūn* would be summoned to take up a position in the midst of the fray so that the

¹⁴⁸ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 143; vol. 9, p. 69; K. *al-Uyūn*, p. 395.

¹⁴⁹ Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 405; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 625; Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, p. 222; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 496.

¹⁵⁰ Dīnawarī, *Akḥbār*, pp. 135, 379, 381; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 114, 390, 416, 478; vol. 9, p. 69; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 115; Abū al-Ṭayyib, *ʿAwn al-Maʾbūd*, vol. 7, p. 333; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 5, p. 412.

¹⁵¹ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 4, p. 374.

soldiers would not become thirsty and thus need to leave their position for refreshment.¹⁵³

When facing non-Muslim enemies, the 'Abbāsid armies were accompanied by translators (*tarājimah*, sing. *turjumān*), whose main duty was to interpret between themselves and the enemy.¹⁵⁴

Whenever the army set out on a long military expedition, especially against a non-Muslim foe, it was usually accompanied by many merchants, who would rush from different parts of the Islamic territories to join the army and take advantage of this event.¹⁵⁵ During the campaign against Ammūriyyah in 223/838, the 'Abbāsid army under the command of Caliph al-Mu'taṣim is reported to have been accompanied by 30,000 merchants and provisioners.¹⁵⁶ Throughout the campaign period these traders would open mobile markets (*aswāq*) where soldiers could purchase whatever goods they might need. More important, however, was the fact that these wholesale merchants would benefit richly by buying the booty won by the army. The booty would usually include all sorts of goods including slaves (considered the most valuable assets), beasts, military equipment, and personal possessions, which most often were all sold at truly bargain prices. On some occasions a *birdhawn* (hinny)

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 637; vol. 9, p. 40.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, vol. 9, p. 40.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

¹⁵⁵ Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 244; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 153, 406; Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 357.

¹⁵⁶ Vasiliev, *Byzance*, vol. 1, p. 146; Bury, *Eastern Roman Empire*, p. 263.

would be sold for only a single *dirham* and a mule for less than ten *dirhams*, a coat of mail for less than one *dirham*, and twenty swords again for just a *dirham*.¹⁵⁷

The last significant element of the 'Abbāsīd armies' supportive services were the spies (*'uyūn*, sing. *'ayn*), who were responsible for gathering information about the enemies. The 'Abbāsīds realized the importance of espionage and the dimensions of its techniques since the clandestine phase of their movement in Khurāsān. During that period, as travellers and merchants, the 'Abbāsīd propagandists would wander in the triangle that stretches between Ḥumaymah, Kūfah, and Khurāsān, spreading the ideology of the 'Abbāsīd cause while seeking information about weaknesses on the Umayyad side. This information was then delivered to the chief *dā'iyyah* in Kūfah, who, in turn, was the only person entitled to pass it to the 'Abbāsīd Imam in Ḥumaymah. In the light of this information the Imam would then set the agenda to be followed by his propagandists in the coming stage of the campaign.¹⁵⁸

Meanwhile, these 'Abbāsīd intelligence activities were faced at most times by a weak surveillance system that was operated by the central government. It was especially flimsy in Khurāsān, where the Umayyad governors were completely immersed in the dilemma of the tribal strife in the province and thus were unaware that the 'Abbāsīds' propagandists were very actively promoting their cause. Indeed, even when the 'Abbāsīds' covert activities started to reach the surface, news of them

¹⁵⁷Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 153; vol. 9, p. 69; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 45; *K. al-'Uyūn*, p. 279, 395; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 157.

¹⁵⁸*Akhbār*, pp. 194-5.

still did not reach the central government in Damascus, this on account of the continuing political struggle between the Umayyads' governors in Iraq and the governor of Khurāsān.¹⁵⁹ Thus, after the end of the Umayyads' rule, when one of the elderly members of Banū Umayyah was asked for the reason that led to their demise, he answered with the following definitive statement: "Concealing of information and mutual envy among the most competent of our officials were the most apparent reasons for the vanishing of our rule."¹⁶⁰

Learning from the mistakes of their predecessors, the 'Abbāsids gave close attention to the establishment of a wide intelligence network which not only informed them of events in the far reaches of their empire, but also of the conduct of the slaves in the corridors of their palaces.¹⁶¹

This intelligence system operated in two modes. The first was a formal and overt one, which was conducted by the postmasters (*aṣḥāb al-barīd*), who were scattered all over the provinces of the state.¹⁶² In addition to their duty of transmitting official correspondence, they were also responsible for writing secret reports about every event and circumstance in their areas of operation, starting from the conduct and activities of the governor and other high officials in the province to the state of the

¹⁵⁹It is reported that the governor of Iraq, 'Umar b. Hubayrah, would deliberately fail to deliver the reports sent to him by Naṣr b. Sayyār, the governor of Khurāsān, about the 'Abbāsīd activities and the critical situation in the province to Caliph Marwān b. Muḥammad. Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *al-Iqd*, vol. 4, p. 493; Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, p. 241; Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyūn*, vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 128.

¹⁶⁰Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, p. 241 ("لقد كان استتار الأخبار وتحماسد الأكفاء من أوكد أسباب زوال ملكنا").

¹⁶¹Jāḥiẓ, *al-Tāj*, pp. 169-71; Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, p. 316.

people and the food prices in the markets.¹⁶³ The most distinctive aspect of this sort of intelligence agent was that they enjoyed a wide-ranging power and freedom in being able to report everything they heard or saw, even if that information would be damaging to the governor's interests.¹⁶⁴ This power was based on a dual foundation. First, the fact that these agents were appointed directly by the Caliph himself meant that they were not under the authority of the local governors. More important, however, was the fact that the vast majority of them were chosen from among the 'Abbāsids' *mawālī*, who were the most trusted of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs' personnel. This being so, they derived their power and immunity directly from their close bond with the Caliph himself.¹⁶⁵ It was in the nature of the task of the postmasters, which we have seen involved close surveillance of state officials, that at times a great deal of tension would arise between the two, including also the chief of police, who shared many common aims and interests with the postmasters. Nevertheless, the intelligence agents always seem to have had the upper hand and the support of the 'Abbāsīd Caliph.¹⁶⁶

The second mode of espionage used during the 'Abbāsīd era relied on secrecy and concealment through the covert work of spies. This type of agent was recruited from both sexes and was used to penetrate various social circles in the guise of merchants,

¹⁶²See Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 67 for an account reflecting the importance and character of the postmaster's office in the time of Caliph al-Manṣūr.

¹⁶³Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 96; Samādī, "Some Aspects", p. 149.

¹⁶⁴See e.g. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 68, 594-5; vol. 9, p. 102; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 457; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 10, p. 167.

¹⁶⁵See e.g. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 80.

travellers, physicians, money-changers, or slaves.¹⁶⁷ Spies of this sort played a vital role in peacetime as well as during times of crisis. In peacetime, the ‘Abbāsids’ espionage contributed effectively to the exposure of many of the rebel movements while still in their early stages, thus enabling the ‘Abbāsīd authorities to move fast and nip them while still in the bud. The efficiency and effectiveness of ‘Abbāsīd espionage is well illustrated by the events of the ‘Alid rebellion in 145/ 763. Historical sources indicate that when it came to al-Manṣūr’s attention that the political ambitions of the ‘Alid family had begun to take a serious course and to pose a threat to ‘Abbāsīd rule, he decided to place them under constant surveillance. He sent an agent by the name of ‘Uqbah b. Salm to Madīnah with the purpose of gathering intelligence regarding Muḥammad b. ‘Abdallāh. ‘Uqbah thus entered Madīnah as a perfume merchant and dispatched his slaves to gather information under the cover of wishing to sell scent, which enabled them to eavesdrop on the inhabitants. He then sent the intelligence he had gathered, in report form, to the Caliph.¹⁶⁸ Sources conclude that ‘Abbāsīd espionage succeeded later to penetrate the ‘Alids’ ranks and ascertain the location of their headquarters on Mount Juhaynah.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶For evidence of this, see Ibn Ṭayfūr, *Baghdād*, pp. 43-4.

¹⁶⁷Slaves, and slave-girls in particular, seem to have been widely used, especially in the surveillance of high officials. It is reported, for example, that Caliph al-Mahdī employed a slave-girl to spy on the activities of the vizier Ya‘qūb b. Dāwūd, whose career came to an end following the intelligence report of the slave-girl. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 158-9; vol. 7, p. 631; Ibn al-Ṭīqṭaqā, *al-Fakhrī*, p. 220; ‘Abdul Jabbār Bag, “The ‘Serfs’ ”, p. 114.

¹⁶⁸*K. al-‘Uyūn*, p. 234.

¹⁶⁹Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 527; *K. al-‘Uyūn*, p. 234. Mount Juhaynah is located on the north-west coast of the Arabian Peninsula. Its name was derived from the Juhaynah tribe, one of the tribes of Quḍā‘ah, who were the main settlers in that area. *ET*², s.v. “Djuhaina”, *ET*², s.v. “Kuḍā‘a”; Jane, “The History of al-Ṭabarī”, vol. 28, p. 103, n. 494.

Moreover, Caliph al-Manṣūr was able, through the supply of misinformation to the ‘Alid leadership about the political situation and the extent of their supporter, to limit their chances of achieving victory. It was reported that al-Manṣūr would write to Muḥammad b. ‘Abdallāh in the guise of one his commanders, Ḥumayd b. Qaḥṭabah, encouraging Muḥammad to move fast and declare his revolt, and assuring him that they would support him in the event of this happening. Consequently, Muḥammad, who started to lay his plans according to this false information, used to tell his courtiers, “Were we to meet, all of the army commanders would side with me.”¹⁷⁰

It is worth noting, however, that the role of the Abbāsids’ spies sometimes went beyond the gathering of intelligence or supplying the enemy with false information, but more importantly carrying out assassination operations against the Caliph’s enemies. When ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Alī rebelled against Caliph al-Manṣūr, the latter sent Muḥammad b. al-Ṣawal to try to penetrate the ranks of ‘Abdallāh with the aim not only of learning their news and plans but also of seizing any chance to assassinate him.¹⁷¹ The case of Idrīs b. ‘Abdallāh b. al-Ḥasan, the founder of the Idrīsīd dynasty in the Maghrib, provides another example of this double-dealing.¹⁷²

It was natural that the activities of the ‘Abbāsids’ spies stretched beyond the boundaries of the Islamic territory into the neighbouring states, especially against the

¹⁷⁰Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 559; *K. al-‘Uyūn*, pp. 342-3; Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. 3, p. 224.

¹⁷¹Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. 3, pp. 106-7.

¹⁷²Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 192-204; Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh*, vol. 4, pp. 15-23; Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 405; Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, pp. 336, 353.

Byzantines, the traditional foe of *dār al-Islām*. Thus, for instance, under al-Rashīd, a man by the name of ‘Abdallāh al-Sīdī served for twenty years as a spy inside the Byzantine Empire.¹⁷³ Moreover, for this purpose, the ‘Abbāsids also continued the practice of using non-Muslims, particularly those inhabiting the frontier region with the Byzantines, such as the Christian Jarājimah (Mardaite) community, who inhabited the area between Jabal Lukkām (Mount Amanus) and the frontier city of Anṭākiyah in northern Syria.¹⁷⁴

Among the common practices employed in the recruitment of intelligence agents was care taken to ensure that spies remained unknown to one another and to the army at large. This was to prevent conspiracy, to ensure that a captured agent could not disclose the identity or whereabouts of others, and to prevent the identity of the spies from spreading amongst the soldiers, which would effectively destroy their secrecy.¹⁷⁵ For this purpose, the commander of the army used to detail each one of the spies to one of his personal retinue or officers who would be the only one in charge of conducting the spy.¹⁷⁶ To ensure the reliability and genuineness of information received, especially when the report was vital, the commander of the

¹⁷³Von Kremer, *The Orient*, p. 354.

¹⁷⁴Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 189-91. On the Jarājimah, see further Hitti, *Lebanon*, pp. 244-6.

¹⁷⁵Harthamī, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 24; Anṣārī, *Tafrīḥ*, p. 19, ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd, “Risālah”, p. 192.

¹⁷⁶Harthamī, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 25; Anṣārī, *Tafrīḥ*, p. 19, ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd, “Risālah”, p. 193. We learn that during the war with Bābak, Abū Sa‘īd al-Marwazī (also known as al-Thaghri), one of al-Afshin’s commanders, was responsible for connecting with one of the ‘Abbāsids’ agents whose name was Ṣāliḥ. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 14.

army would dispatch another agent to confirm the veracity of the first report.¹⁷⁷ On occasions, the commander of the army might intentionally allow the enemy to gather intelligence about his army. The intention behind this was either to trick him by allowing him to gather false information that was concocted for his benefit, or to demonstrate the extent of their readiness and capabilities, and thus deliver a psychological blow.¹⁷⁸ Finally, on occasion the situation might also require the commander of the army to attempt to turn the captured spy's loyalty. This was usually done by offering a better salary than he obtained from his previous employers.¹⁷⁹

Summary

This chapter provides details about the most distinctive features of the early 'Abbāsid military units, including the cavalry, infantry, and the non-combatant groups which supported the army from the outset of the march to the end of fighting and the dividing of booty. The most salient features to be studied in this chapter may be summarized as follows.

¹⁷⁷This procedure is mentioned as being in use during the civil war as well as in the war with Bābak. See Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 386; vol. 9, p. 14.

¹⁷⁸Harthamī, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 25. This occurred, for example, during the war with Bābak, when al-Afshīn allowed Bābak's spy to take a close look at his army and the strength of his defences. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 33.

¹⁷⁹Harthamī, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 24. It is mentioned that during the war with Bābak, al-Afshīn used not to kill or beat Bābak's spies. To the contrary, he would give them money and gifts and question them about the sum of money Bābak was accustomed to give them, so that he could offer to double it for them in return for their becoming spies in his service. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 13; *K. al-'Uyūn*, p. 383.

As with many prior revolutions, the number of horses available to the ‘Abbāsids in the early days of their revolution was relatively small. Nonetheless, the number soon increased as a result of the affiliation of the Arab tribal forces in Khurāsān to the ‘Abbāsīd side and through the large number of horses seized from the defeated Syrian armies. After the revolutionary period, the cavalry formed the backbone of the ‘Abbāsīd armies, often determining the outcome of battles. An apogee in the cavalry’s development was reached with the introduction of Turks into the ‘Abbāsīd military institution.

In early ‘Abbāsīd times, riding beasts were generally obtained from three principle sources: horses captured in battle, horses received under peace treaties signed with enemies, and horses received as gifts or in payment of taxes.

The training of the ‘Abbāsīd cavalry included learning the skills of evasion, jousting, hit and run, using the bow and lance from horseback, and learning the skilful manoeuvres practised in polo.

Although the ‘Abbāsīd cavalry continued to use conventional arms such as the sword and lance, their shapes and characters varied during the first century of ‘Abbāsīd rule according to the fighting elements that dominated the ‘Abbāsīd army during that period. In addition, the introduction of the Turks into the ‘Abbāsīd military institution brought new types of weapons that were previously unknown to both the Arabs and the Iranians. Among these was the lasso (*wahaq*).

In battle formation the 'Abbāsid cavalry were generally positioned in the two flanks and behind the infantry. Apart from their duty in the midst of the battlefield, 'Abbāsid cavalry bore other duties including reconnaissance, safeguarding the army while in camp and during combat, and setting ambushes.

The next most indispensable military unit after the cavalry in the early 'Abbāsid armies was the infantry, who oftentimes assumed the initial, direct clash with the enemy's forces. Their potential role was also demonstrated when facing unmounted foes and in difficult terrain like the marshlands of southern Iraq. Besides swords, long lances, bows, and shields, the 'Abbāsid infantry employed many other hand-to-hand implements of war of Persian origin as such the mace, the iron club, the battle-axe, and the wooden club. Moreover, for the first time in the history of Muslim armies, the 'Abbāsid infantry also used the sling, which proved to be astonishingly effective in combat.

The archers usually led off the battle with a heavy salvo of arrows. The use of the bow had not been widespread among the Arabs in pre-Islamic times and, although Islamic teachings and the affiliation of some non-Arab auxiliary forces such as the Asāwirah to the Arab side, had enhanced the presence of archers within the Muslim armies, yet the archery division only reached its zenith under the 'Abbāsids. This was not only because of the type of warfare favoured by the 'Abbāsid forces, but also because of the long-standing tradition of archery in Khurāsān, the homeland of many of the 'Abbāsid troops. This leading in archery was further enhanced with the

introduction of Turkish fighters, who were famed for their great skills in bowmanship on horseback.

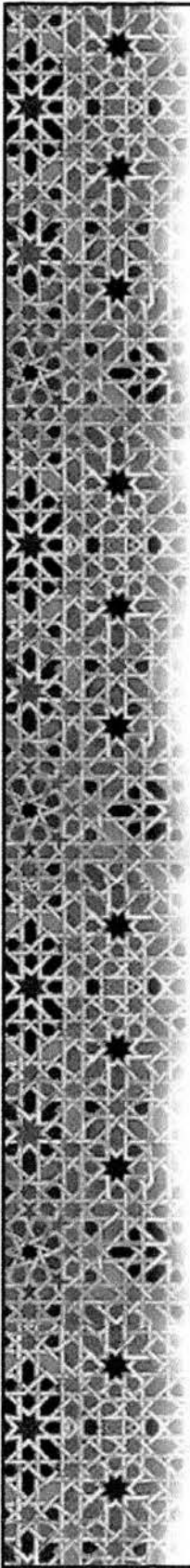
Early 'Abbāsid armies continued the tradition of employing hurling machines in their military operations, especially against their enemies' fortresses and stronghold cities. Nevertheless, early 'Abbāsids were innovative in their use of such machines as they employed for the first time in Muslim history flaming naphtha, which caused much more devastation than stone projectiles. To protect the naphtha-hurlers (*naffātūn*) from the effects of the fire, either while composing and using the naphtha against the enemy or when it was used against the Muslims themselves, these corps wore special fire-proof suits.

In almost all their military campaigns the 'Abbāsid forces were joined by pioneer and labour corps (*fa'alah*) whose duty included road-making and mending, bridge construction, digging work, and fortress-building and demolishing.

Maintaining order within the ranks of the troops, preventing desertion attempts, tracking down spies or infiltrators, and executing punishments, which might include executions, were all part of the responsibilities of the army police (*Shurṭat al-'Askar* or *Jund al-Shurṭa*).

In addition to tasks of the main units of the army, there were non-combatant functions, which were carried out by specially appointed individuals. Among these were the guides, physicians, chemists, judges, provisioners, translators, and spies, the last of which were not only involved in 'Abbāsid times in gathering information or

spreading misinformation, but also in carrying out assassinations of prominent figures among the enemy.



Chapter 4

Administration

Introduction

This chapter of the study is divided into five separate topics, each of which deals with one administrative aspect of the early 'Abbāsid army. These aspects are: means of military communication, army supplies and provisioning, levies and volunteers, exchange of captives, and finally army command and ranks.

4.1 Means of Military Communication

4.1.1 Mounted Post-Riders

During the early Muslim conquests, military communication between the central government in Madīnah and its commanders in the battlefields was mainly by means of camel-riders.¹ However, after the succession of the Umayyads to power in 41/602, owing to the expansion of the Islamic state, a regular postal service (*barīd*) was needed to ensure confidentiality and swiftness in transmitting official communications from Damascus to the outlying state provinces and *vice versa*. It is reported that Caliph Mu'āwiyah b. Abī Sufyān (41-60/661-680) was the first to establish the postal system in Islam, although it was developed in imitation of the systems that had been used in the Byzantine and Sāsānid Empires.² The *barīd*, which was used for military and civil purposes, had reached a high level of efficiency by the time of the 'Abbāsids, during whose rule a government bureau was

¹Hill, "Role", pp. 33-4; Ahmad and Hill, *Islamic Technology*, p. 104; *EI*², s.v. "Badw".

²*EI*², s.v. "Barīd". For the latest study on the Muslim *Barīd* system, see Adam Silverstein's Cambridge Ph.D. thesis, 2002.

established in Baghdad which was responsible for supervising all the issues related to the provision of this service.³ In order to ensure the swift delivery of the post, postal stages (*sikak*, sing. *sikkah*) were established all along the main routes of the empire, ranged at a distance of two to six farsakhs⁴ apart.⁵ So, when a postal courier reached one of these stages and his mount was exhausted, he would quickly exchange it for a fresh one and then go at full gallop to the next postal stage, where the same procedure was repeated, and so on until he reached the place intended.⁶

Although, in terms of speed, the *barīd* was highly efficient in peacetime, it reached its optimum performance in times of crisis. In such times, the central government in Baghdad sought to supply the postal stages with more mounts and, in addition, shortened the distance between the stages, in some cases to as little as one farsakh.⁷

The efficiency of the *barīd* in wartime is well illustrated by the war with Bābak in 222/837. In order to stay in touch with his army, Caliph al-Mu'taṣim set up a very advanced postal service that facilitated communication between himself, based in Sāmarrā', and his chief commander, al-Afshīn, in Ādharbayjān. It is interesting to read al-Ṭabarī's detailed description of this military communication network. Thus, he observes that:

³Qudāmāh, *Kharāj*, p. 77.

⁴ The farsakh was equivalent to 5.985 km. *EI*², s.v. "Farsakh".

⁵The distance between one postal stage and the next varied from one region to another. Maqdisī (*Aḥsan*, p. 66) indicates that in Iraq the distance was four farsakhs, in Syria six, and two farsakhs in Khurāsān.

⁶Ibn al-Ṭiḡṭāqā, *Fakhrī*, p. 106; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 52.

⁷Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 52.

Al-Mu'taṣim stationed sleek, swift horses (*khayl muḍammarah*) along the road from Sāmarrā to the pass leading to Ḥulwān. At the start of each farsakh was specially stationed a horse with a rapid rider (*Mujrī*), who would gallop with the news, so that he might relay it personally to another man [similarly stationed], placing it in the latter's hand directly from his own. In the stretch from beyond Ḥulwān to Adharbayjān they had stationed mounts from al-Marj; these were ridden for one day or two days and then would be exchanged for new mounts that were then dispatched onward, and slaves from the personnel at al-Marj would travel on their back, each mount being stationed at the beginning of each [new] farsakh. He [al-Mu'taṣim] posted for them watchmen (*dayādibah*) on the mountaintops by night and day and ordered them to cry out when news came to them (i.e., of the approach of one of the relays). When the person who was near the shouting heard the noise, he got himself ready, but his opposite number who had shouted was not to go to him until the other was waiting for him on the road; then he would take the dispatch bag (*Kharīṭah*). In this way, the mail bag used to reach Sāmarrā' from al-Afshīn's army camp in four days or less.⁸

Another example of the efficiency of the postal service in wartime is found in accounts of the civil war. It is stated that in 195/811 the news of the victory of Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn over 'Īsā b. Māhān travelled from al-Rayy to al-Ma'mūn in Marw in three days, passing over more than 250 farsakhs on its way.⁹

The remarkable speed of the *barīd* service enabled the central government to utilize it in time of war, not just for the transmission of information, but also for the delivery of military reinforcements to the battlefield as speedily as possible. In 145/763, Caliph al-Manṣūr wrote to his governor in Syria instructing him to send ten men

⁸Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 52 (English translation quoted from Bosworth, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 33, p. 85).

⁹Jahshiyārī, *Wuzarā'*, p. 293; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 394; *K. al-'Uyūn*, p. 325; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 375.

every day by means of post mounts, in order to face the unexpected rebellion of Ibrāhīm al-‘Alawī in Baṣrah.¹⁰

The mounts used by the postal service, which were distinguished by their docked tails and the rattle coming from the cowbell around their necks, differed from one region to another according to the climate and relief found in each. Horses, however, seem to have been used in most of the provinces of the state. Their role in wartime postal service was well illustrated in 219/834 when al-Mu‘taṣim sent ‘Ujayf b. ‘Anbasah to put down the rebellion of the Zuṭṭ¹¹ in the marshland of southern Iraq. In order to stay informed of events on the battlefield, al-Mu‘taṣim stationed a relay of sleek, swift, docked horses at every one of the staging posts (*sikak al-burūd*) that stretched between Baghdad and Baṣrah for the purpose of delivering news to him. By this means, news used to come out from ‘Ujayf and reach al-Mu‘taṣim on the same day.¹²

In addition to horses, mules were also widely used for transmission of the post, especially in cold and mountainous areas, as for instance in Iran, where the rugged

¹⁰Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 629.

¹¹Zuṭṭ is an Arabicization of the Indian ethnic term *Jhāt*. In pre-Islamic times the Sāsānids had used members of this group in some areas of the Gulf region. Their number seems to have increased in Umayyad times, when it is reported that during his conquest of Sind, Muḥammad b. al-Qāsim al-Thaqafī sent back to al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf in Iraq a group of them along with other ethnic groups from Sind. In Iraq they were settled in the Baṭā’ih, south of Kaskar in lower Iraq. Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 462, 536; Bosworth, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 33, p. 7.

¹²Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 8; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 462.

terrain is not suited to horses or camels.¹³

The 'Abbāsids also continued to rely on camels in the postal service, especially in desert areas. The superiority of the camel to any other means of transport lay in the animal's ability to go more than two weeks without water in very hot conditions. Therefore, it is reported that in 166/783 Caliph al-Mahdī erected postal stages all along the main route that stretched between Makkah, Madīnah, and Yaman and, for this service, it is reported that camels were employed along the route.¹⁴ It is most likely that for this type of service certain breeds of camel would be used, specifically those known for their speed and endurance such as the *Nājīyah*, *Mahrīyah*, and the *Bakhtīyah*.¹⁵

4.1.2 Carrier-Pigeons

The use of pigeons for the transmission of information was well known to the Greeks, who employed them, for example, to spread the news of their Olympic games to all parts of the Empire. The Romans also used this mode of

¹³ Ahmad and Hill, *Islamic Technology*, p. 105. It seems that the use of mules in the postal service during the early decades of the 'Abbāsīd rule remained limited to Iran and other eastern provinces. This continued until the reign of al-Rashīd, during which they started to be used in other parts of the Islamic Empire. This can be concluded from an account by al-Qalqashandī (*Ṣubḥ al-A'shā*, vol. 14, p. 141) which indicates that at the request of al-Rashīd, Yaḥyā b. Khālīd al-Barmakī stationed mules in the postal stages (*marākiz*) and gave his instruction that they were not to be used except by the Caliph or the postmaster. Likewise, when al-Jāḥiẓ speaks of the mules in the postal service in 'Abbāsīd times, he only indicates their use from the time of al-Rashīd and onward. For more information on the breeds, characters, and use of mules in the postal service and other related issues, see Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il*, vol. 1, pt. 2, pp. 215-378.

¹⁴ Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-A'shā*, vol. 1, p. 390, Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 162; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 158.

communication, for the first time for military purposes in 34 BC when Hirtius and Brutus were able to exchange messages by means of pigeons during the siege of Modena.¹⁶

However, it seems that it took the Muslim authorities more than a century and a half before they employed this method of communication. Nonetheless, contrary to the common assumption that the earliest recorded use of carrier-pigeons by the Muslims relates to the reign of al-Mu'taṣim,¹⁷ it is now certain that pigeons were in use as early as the time of the 'Abbāsid Caliph al-Rashīd (170-193/786-809). According to Ibn Qutaybah, al-Rashīd employed carrier-pigeons extensively for the transportation of urgent messages between himself and his state officials in the various provinces of the empire.¹⁸ The efficiency of this method of communication was remarkable. Thus, an inquiry addressed by al-Rashīd to one of his officials, the answer to which would have taken more than a month to arrive by land, would reach al-Rashīd within a day by pigeon.¹⁹ It is also stated that the great concern of al-Rashīd for carrier-pigeons caused him firmly to instruct those who were entrusted to look after them

¹⁵Dumayrī, *Ḥayāt al-Ḥayawān al-Kubrā*, vol. 1, p. 28. It is said that a riding camel in good condition could traverse between 70 and 100 miles a day. Hill, "Role", p. 34.

¹⁶Mikhā'il b. Naqūlā, "Musābaqat al-Barq", p. 142; Ameer, *Short History*, p. 418.

¹⁷Ameer, *Short History*, p. 418.

¹⁸Ibn Qutaybah, *al-Imāmah*, pt. 2, p. 193.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

not to involve themselves in any kind of task other than that to which they had been primarily assigned.²⁰

In support of the view that pigeons were widely used by the early ‘Abbāsid Caliphs for the transmission of all kinds of information is another account which commences its narration in the time of al-Ma’mūn. Al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/868) reports that one day al-Ma’mūn asked Sukar, a bondmaid belonging to Umm Ja‘far (i.e. Zubaydah, the wife of Caliph al-Rashīd and the daughter of Ja‘far b. al-Manṣūr) whether she was a free woman or a slave. She replied, “I do not know because whenever Umm Ja‘far is angry with me she tells me that I am a slave and whenever she is satisfied with me she tells me that I am free.” Al-Ma’mūn then said to her, “Write her a letter this minute and ask her about this matter.” She is reported to have written the letter recommended and attached it to the wing of a carrier- pigeon.²¹ Moreover, it is stated that in 222/837, during the reign of al-Mu‘taṣim, carrier-pigeons were sent from Ādharbayjān and Armenia to Sāmarrā’, carrying the news of victory and the capture of Bābak al-Khurramī.²²

Literary works of the early ‘Abbāsid era overflow with information regarding the various breeds of carrier-pigeons, their description, and the methods of their training. Al-Jāḥiẓ indicates the degree of refinement that the Arabs had reached in the art of

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā’il*, vol. 1, pt. 2, p. 157.

²² Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 4, p. 56.

training pigeons for the purpose of carrying correspondence.²³ He also clearly indicates that this method of communication was widely employed, not only by the government and its officials, but by civilians as well, especially in Iraq and the frontier cities of northern Syria.²⁴ As for the prices charged for carrier-pigeons, they exceeded that of any other bird known to the Arabs. In Baghdad, the price of a well-known pigeon could reach more than 500 *dinars*, while a chick could fetch more than 20 and a single egg five *dinars* or more.²⁵

In conveying messages by carrier-pigeon, the most common practice was to place the letter under the wing for security. The strength of the wing also made it well able to carry this additional load.²⁶ Moreover, to ensure the delivery of the message to its intended recipient, the letter would be duplicated and sent via two pigeons, the second being released two hours after the first, so that if one of them lost its bearings, or was seized or killed by predators, then the second bird could still be relied on for safe transmission of the message.²⁷ To make it easy for the pigeon to carry the dispatch, the information was written on a very delicate silky paper using a very fine

²³Jāḥiẓ, *al-Ḥayawān*, vol. 3, pp. 274-5.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 213. In this regard, al-Jāḥiẓ (*ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 96-7), says, "If pigeons were not used in the transmission of news, the people of Raqqah, Mawṣil, and Baghdad would not be able to know what had occurred in Baṣrah and Kūfah on the same day. Meanwhile, the news of any event that has taken place in Kūfah is circulated among the people of Baṣrah on the afternoon of that day."

²⁵*Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 212.

²⁶Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn*, vol. 3, p. 186.

²⁷Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, vol. 1, p. 154.

pen known as *al-ghubār* (powder), reflecting its fineness.²⁸ In addition, the contents of the dispatch would be as brief as possible. Thus, the writers would spare mentioning the *basmala*²⁹ and avoid long introductions and appellations. Instead, the letter would be limited to a mention of the date, time, and information in brief, and it would be sealed with the Qur'ānic sentence "Allah is Sufficient for us, and He is the Best Disposer of affairs (for us)."³⁰

4.1.3 Fire and Smoke Signals

Since ancient times and until recent years, Arab tribesmen used fire and smoke as means of communication. Al-Jāhiz devotes a whole section of his book *al-Ḥayawān* to fire. In this section, entitled "Fire and its varieties", he gives the full range of knowledge regarding fire and its varieties, the role of each kind, and those associated with the Arabs and others ascribed to non-Arabs. Among those mentioned as being used by the Arabs as a means of military communication is *nār al-qirā* (the fire of hospitality). Since pre-Islamic times hospitable Arab individuals used to light fires in front of their homes to declare their hospitality and to guide travellers to come over and find a warm haven and nourishing food. The higher the place in which the fire was and the larger it was built, the greater was the credit accorded to the host.³¹

Fire was also employed by the Arabs as a means of communication and in this case it

²⁸*Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 52. To protect the letter from the effects of the weather, it would be deposited in a very small container made of a sheet of pure beaten gold. Mikhā'il b. Naqūlā, "Musābaqat al-Barq", p. 143.

²⁹Declaration of the name of God using the formula "In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful".

³⁰Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn*, vol. 3, pp. 186-7.

was known as *nār al-ḥarb* (the fire of war), *nār al-indhār* (the fire of warning), or *nār al-uhbah* (the fire of preparation for war). Typically, when an attack was imminent, the chief of the tribe would order a large fire to be kindled at night, while during the day smoke would be used, to warn members of the tribe who were far away and to summon them to an urgent muster.³²

After the coming of Islam and the expansion of Muslim territories to include vast areas, it seems that the Arabs did not utilize fire signals as a means of transmitting information over a long distance until the time of the second orthodox Caliph. Al-Balādhurī points out that Caliph ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb wrote to Mu‘āwiyah b. Abī Sufyān instructing him to restore the fortresses located all along the Syrian coastline and to adopt the use of cressets (*mawāqid*) on them.³³ This mode of military communication was used by Muslims probably until the 7th century AH/13th century AD,³⁴ but only in areas that had previously been Byzantine territory, such as Syria, Asia Minor, and North Africa.³⁵

The transmitting of information by means of fire was achieved by placing large beacons on the summits of high mountains, when available, or on lofty watchtowers

³¹Jāḥiẓ, *al-Ḥayawān*, vol. 5, pp. 134-6; *idem*, *al-Bukhalā’*, pp. 163-4.

³²Jāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān*, vol. 3, p. 22; *idem*, *al-Ḥayawān*, vol. 5, pp. 133-5; *al-Nuwayrī*, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, vol. 1, p. 111.

³³Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 152.

³⁴Al-Anṣārī, writing in the 9th century AH/15th century AD, indicates that this type of military communication was in use at the beginning of the Mamlūk rule in Egypt and that it was employed in relation to the Tartar threat. Later, the peace agreement between the Tartars and the Mamlūks led to the disuse of this mode of communication and the falling into desuetude of the infrastructure on which it rested (*Tafrīḥ al-Kurūb* pp. 12-3).

built specially for this purpose inside fortresses. Then, when danger threatened at night, a fire would be lit on the summit of a high mountain or watchtower, while by daylight smoke signals would be used. The signal would be passed from the top of one mountain or watchtower to the following in a chain, until the signal reached its intended destination.³⁶

The efficiency and speed of this type of military communication in 'Abbāsid times is evidenced by an account in al-Maqrīzī, who points out that during the governorship of Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Aghlab over Ifrīqiya in 261/875, fires used to be kindled on the castles and watchtowers that stretched along the coast between the cities of Sabta (Ceuta) and Alexandria. By this means, he says, the message would take one night to travel between the two cities, while it would take a month by land.³⁷

4.1.4 Drums, Trumpets and Banners

These instruments of communication were normally used for sending signals or dispatch messages between the commander of the army and his troops during marches, especially when the numbers of men in the army were large and their

³⁵ Mez, *Renaissance*, pp. 502-3.

³⁶ Anṣārī, *Tafrīḡ al-Kurūb*, p. 17. An actual description of the way information was transmitted by means of fire and smoke is preserved for us in an account given by al-Maqrīsī (*Aḥsan*, p. 177).

³⁷ Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, vol. 1, p. 174. It is reported that this mode of military communication continued to be used in North Africa until 440/1049, when al-Mu'izz b. Bādīs's revolt against the Fātimids, who were no longer able to protect the coastal fortresses from Bedouin attacks. Ḥasan, *al-Nuẓum*, p. 230; *idem*, *Tārīkh al-Islām al-Siyāsī*, vol. 3, p. 276.

different companies were separated by long distances.³⁸ During the war with the Khurramiyyah in the difficult terrain of Ādharbayjān in 222/ 837, the ‘Abbāsīd army is said to have carried with it 21 large drums, which the ‘Abbāsīd commander al-Afshīn used as a means of communicating with his troops, who were separated over a vast area. The signal for marching forward was given with the beating of the drums, but if al-Afshīn wanted the army to stop he would silence the drums and then the troops would stop in whatever part of the mountain, valley, or other place they might be.³⁹ In the same campaign, al-Afshīn would also instruct the *Kūhbāniyyah* to climb up to the summit of the mountains to watch the roads, so that if they noticed any suspicious movement by the enemy, they could inform the army by waving the banners that they were carrying.⁴⁰

4.1.5 Arrows

This means of military communication was employed in difficult circumstances when it became almost impossible to transmit information by other means, as, for instance, in time of siege. The manner adopted to place the letter in an arrow and shoot it to those in or outside the besieged city.⁴¹ This means of military communication is reported to have been used by the ‘Abbāsīd forces during their siege of the fortress of Iṣbahbadh in Ṭabaristān in 142/760. It is recorded that when

³⁸Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, p. 261; vol. 4, p. 43; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, pp. 20, 26, 30; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 407; vol. 9, pp. 25, 32, 34; K. al-‘Uyūn, p. 332.

³⁹Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 34; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 30

⁴⁰Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 30, 43. It is mentioned that in this campaign the ‘Abbāsīd army used to carry 12 large black banners and 500 small banners (*ibid.*, p. 34).

the stand-off of the 'Abbāsīd forces became too prolonged, Marzūq Abū al-Khaṣīb, a *mawlā* of Caliph al-Manṣūr and one of the army commanders, proposed a ruse to enable their forces to conquer the city. Marzūq suggested that, under pretence, he should desert to the side of Iṣbahbadh's defenders, claiming that he had been ill-treated and promising in revenge to point out the weak points in the Muslims' encampment. Marzūq's trickery worked so well with the defenders of Iṣbahbadh that he became one of those who were assigned to take turns in opening and closing the city gates. At this point, Marzūq wrote a letter, placed it in an arrow, and shot it to his confederates, informing them of the success of his ruse and designating a night on which he would open the gates for them. This he did on the appointed night and the 'Abbāsīd forces were able to capture the city.⁴²

4.2 Army Supplies and Provisioning

During the early days of Islam and the Umayyad Caliphate, the responsibility of supplying the soldiers with arms and food in time of war fell upon the soldiers themselves rather than the state. Each man who was in receipt of a stipend (*'aṭā*) from the *Dīwān* was obligated, when called upon, to join the campaign, providing himself with food, arms, and anything else he might need, deducting that from the food subsidies (*arzāq*) and stipend that he received from the state annually. "The application of this system seems, however, to have led in time to a serious dilemma as many campaign draftees became reluctant to provision themselves properly for

⁴¹Harthamī, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 64.

war and were especially deficient in the supply of weaponry. This caused the government to take a firm stand in emphasizing the necessity for soldiers to equip themselves adequately in accordance with the amount of stipend that each individual received. Kathīr b. Shihāb, governor of Rayy and Qazwīn in the time of Caliph Mu'āwiyah (41-60/661-680), is reported to have stipulated, whenever he led a military campaign, that each man under his command equip himself with a full kit. This would typically include a shield (*turs*), a coat of mail (*dir'*), a helmet (*bayḍah*), a pack needle (*misallah*), needles (*ibar*), linen threads (*khuyūṭ*), an awl (*makhṣaf*), a pair of scissors (*miqrāḍ*), a horse's nose-bag (*mikhhlāh*), and a feed-basket made of palm leaves (*tillīshah*).⁴³ Al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf is also said to have stipulated that every soldier who was in receipt of a stipend of 300 *dirhams* or more had to equip himself with a horse, a sword, and a bow with 60 arrows.⁴⁴ Similarly, Caliph 'Umar II is reported to have instructed his governors to make sure that any man who was in receipt of a stipend of 100 *dinars* had to equip himself with an Arabian horse, a shield, a sword, a lance, and a bow.⁴⁵

Besides the soldiers' own self-provision, generous contributions from wealthy Muslims were a very important source of provision of food and military equipment for the early Muslim armies. On many occasions the Prophet Muḥammad urged those who had money, spears, riding beasts, or food to take part in the provisioning

⁴²Tabarī, *Tā'īkh*, vol. 7, pp. 512-3; Basawī, *al-Ma'rifah*, vol. 1, p. 125; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 415.

⁴³Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 390.

⁴⁴Al-'Alī, *Tanzīmāt*, p. 138.

⁴⁵Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 5, p. 351.

of those Muslims who lacked these things. In this context, the Prophet also declared that anyone who provisioned a fighter for battle would have the same reward from God as the fighter.⁴⁶ Accordingly, rich Muslims used to donate military equipment, food, and riding beasts to those who needed them. At the battle of Ḥunayn in 8/630, the Companion Nawfal b. al-Ḥārith is reported to have provided the Muslim army with 300 lances.⁴⁷ Again, in preparation for the expedition of Tabūk in 9/631, ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān donated 70,000 *dirhams*, which were spent in providing one third of the 30,000 men with food, equipment, and mounts.⁴⁸ Muslim women are also reported to have made contributions toward war expenses by donating their jewelry to be sold in order to raise funds.⁴⁹

Individual contributions continued to be a source of funding for the Islamic armies in Umayyad times, but on occasions it seems that contributions were taken on a compulsory basis. Al-Rabī‘ b. Ziyād al-Ḥārithī, the governor of Khurāsān appointed by Ziyād b. Abī Sufyān, is reported to have been the first to have ordered the wealthy people among his troops to contribute towards campaign expenses. Such contributions were known as *tanāḥud*.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 4, p. 28; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 3, pp. 1506-7; Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, vol. 3, p. 157; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 3, p. 102.

⁴⁷ Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 4, p. 47.

⁴⁸ Wāqidi, *Maghāzī*, vol. 3, p. 339; Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. 1, p. 368; Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 6, p. 78.

⁴⁹ Wāqidi, *Maghāzī*, vol. 3, p. 991.

⁵⁰ Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 507; Levy, *Social*, p. 415.

Under the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate, however, changes in the provision and supply system necessarily occurred with the fundamental changes that took place within the fiscal and administrative system of the Islamic military institution. While the ‘Abbāsīd authority worked to abolish the traditional system of stipends (*‘aṭā*) within its central forces, it replaced it with the *artizāq* system, under which soldiers would enlist in the army as a full-time profession. In return, the state would take upon its shoulders the responsibility of training and allotting them a fixed monthly salary as long as they continued to serve in the army. Another significant change was the large increase in the pay of the ‘Abbāsīd soldiers, compared with that received by the Umayyad troops, the expense of which was met by depriving the former of the food subsidies that the latter used to receive from the state. By this reform, the ‘Abbāsīd soldiers became themselves totally responsible for buying the cereal crops that they needed during peacetime.⁵¹ Nevertheless, in wartime the supply of their daily rations would become a duty of the state.⁵² Moreover, the rate of pay was no longer the primary criterion deciding the military division that the soldier would belong to, whether cavalry or infantry, and consequently the type of equipment that he would equip himself with. Instead, personal martial skills became the key issue in deciding

⁵¹In this regard al-‘Alī (*Baghdād*, vol. 1, p. 187) indicates that stopping the distribution of food subsidies to the soldiers in the ‘Abbāsīd period led to an increase in the economic activities of the urban and rural markets. This was because soldiers had to buy the cereals they needed from local markets, which in turn depended on what was imported from the countryside. So, peasants were able to sell their products to the urban dwellers for hard cash, which enabled them to pay their taxes to the state. By contrast, the peasants in Umayyad times would pay both hard cash as well as their products, which were freely distributed among the recipients of the *Dīwān*. In consequence, most of the time the peasants suffered from a lack of ready cash, which affected their ability to pay the tax due to the state and thus caused them a lot of trouble with the authority.

⁵²Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 152; vol. 9, pp. 16-7, 32, 40; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 32.

the amount of pay one would receive, as the cavalryman received double that paid to the infantryman.⁵³

In contrast to prevailing policy under the Umayyads, the responsibility for provisioning soldiers with military equipment during the 'Abbāsīd period fell upon the state rather than the soldiers themselves. This is demonstrated by the fact that while there is a lack of evidence to indicate the existence of food storehouses in Baghdad, on the other hand there is strong evidence of the existence of arms warehouses (*khazā'in al-silāh*), even including the names of their administrators (*aṣḥāb khizānat al-silāh*).⁵⁴ Sources also give indications of the amount of military equipment stored in them. It is mentioned, for example, that the arms warehouses in the time of the first 'Abbāsīd Caliph, Abū al-'Abbās, contained 50,000 coats of mail (*durū'*), 50,000 swords, 30,000 *jawshans*⁵⁵, and 200,000 lances.⁵⁶ Moreover, al-Faḍl b. al-Rabī' states that, after the accession of al-Amīn to the Caliphal throne, he was ordered by the latter to make an inventory of the contents of these warehouses. Hence, on al-Faḍl's instructions, the secretaries and the warehouse foremen spent four months counting and sorting their contents. The inventory listed, among other items, the following: 10,000 golden swords, 50,000 lances, 100,000 bows, 100,000 special coats of mail, 50,000 ordinary coats of mail, 10,000 helmets (*bayḍāt*, sing. *bayḍah*), 20,000 *jawshans*, 150,000 shields, 40,000 special saddles, 30,000 ordinary

⁵³Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 534, 550.

⁵⁴Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, pp. 13, 17, 23.

⁵⁵The *jawshan* was a coat of mail made to protect only the front part of the fighter's body.

⁵⁶Ibn al-Zubayr, *al-Dhakhā'ir wa'l-Tuḥaf*, p. 213.

saddles, 4,000 tents (*qibāb*, sing. *qubbah*) with their accessories, and 150 pavilions (*sarādīq*, sing. *sardāq*).⁵⁷

There can be no doubt that the amount of expenditure (*nafaqāt*) by the central government in Baghdad on its armed forces in peacetime was subject to huge increase in time of war to cover the necessary extra costs incurred by the army on campaign. The amount that the ‘Abbāsids had to spend on their military campaigns varied from one to another according to their size, their destination, and, most importantly, the length of time that their forces took to accomplish their military objectives. In the war against his uncle ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Alī in 137/755, Caliph al-Manṣūr is estimated to have spent between 12 and 18 million *dirhams* on the army that he sent under the command of Abū Muslim.⁵⁸ So also, in the war against the Khārijites in Ifrīqiya in 154/770, al-Manṣūr had to dispatch his commander Yazīd b. Ḥātim with an army of 50,000 soldiers and to spend 36 million *dirhams* to maintain this army.⁵⁹ Moreover, during the campaign against the Byzantines in 165/782, Hārūn al-Rashīd, who was in command, is reported to have had armed forces of more than 95,793 men. In addition to the 100,000 head of cattle and sheep that had to be slaughtered to feed this army, al-Rashīd also took with him 194,450 *dīnārs* in

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

⁵⁸ Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. 3, p. 107.

⁵⁹ Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 118; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 44. In al-Azdī's account (*Tārīkh*, p. 218), the amount is stated to have been only three million *dirhams*, a figure which seems far too small for such a large army.

gold and 21,414,800 *dirhams* in silver to cover the expenses of his troops.⁶⁰ Likewise, to bring an end to the rebellion of Rāfi' b. al-Layth in Khurāsān, Caliph al-Rashīd admitted with regret that he had spent more than million *dirhams* and still had not achieved what he had hoped to.⁶¹ Last but not least, during the military operations against Bābak in Ādharbayjān, al-Mu'taṣim is reported to have sent with his commander Aytākh in 222/837 one instalment of 30 million *dirhams* to cover the expenses of the soldiers who were fighting there under the leadership of al-Afshīn.⁶²

All these figures gives a clear indication of the huge amount of spending that the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs had to outlay in their military operations. While part of this money was spent on such provisions as food, arms, medical attention, as well as fodder for army beasts, the remainder was expended in pay and bonuses for those soldiers who would carry out duties over and above their normal military tasks in the battlefield.⁶³

In addition to the supplies and provisions that the army would take with it when it set out from Baghdad, it would also gather provisions from the Islamic towns and villages that lay along its route as well as from those located near to the battlefield. In the war with Bābak, for example, the 'Abbāsīd forces are reported to have received large quantities of provisions and food supplies from the towns of

⁶⁰Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 152-3; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 248; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, pp. 156-7.

⁶¹Jahshiyārī, *Wuzarā'*, p. 228.

⁶²Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 23, 29; *K. al-'Uyūn*, p. 385; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 28; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 311; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, vol. 10, p. 294; Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 425.

⁶³Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 15, 40, 59.

Marāghah and Sīrwān in Ādharbayjān.⁶⁴ ‘Abbāsīd forces would also sometimes take food supplies from their enemies either directly or indirectly. Indirectly, they could first obtain food supplies by plundering the cities and villages of their enemies, especially those located along their way to the battlefield, and, secondly, through what they could take at the conclusion of the battle.⁶⁵ Directly, food supplies might be obtained under the terms of peace treaties signed with their enemies, such as the one signed by Hārūn al-Rashīd with Augusta, the Byzantine ruler, in 165/782. Accordingly, Augusta agreed to pay tribute of 70 or 80 thousand *dīnārs* as well as to provide the ‘Abbāsīd army with guides and to facilitate its provisioning on its way back home.⁶⁶

The diet of the soldiers during the campaign would vary according to the phases of the campaign itself. During long encampments the armed forces would be fed well, being served with freshly cooked meat, of sheep, goats, cows, or camels. Meanwhile, during marches, as well as during breaks in fighting, the soldiers would survive mainly on dried food such as hard dates (*qaṣab*), barley-mush (*sawīq*), and dry biscuit (*ka‘k*).⁶⁷ With the exception of dates, fruit such as oranges, apples, bananas, and melons was most probably not included in the soldiers’ food menu as such

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-7.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 8, pp. 153, 313; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 42.

⁶⁶ *K. al-‘Uyūn*, pp. 279, 392; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 152; vol. 9, pp. 60-2; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, pp. 156-7; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 42.

⁶⁷ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 153; vol. 9, pp. 32-3, 39, 40, 65; Ibn Qutaybah, *‘Uyūn al-Akhbār*, vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 206; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, pp. 29, 32.

comestibles seem in those days to have been luxurious food items that at least would not be served to lower-ranking soldiers.⁶⁸

The supplies and provisions of the army would also include large quantities of fodder, especially barley, for the army beasts. But with the availability of natural pastures during the march and encampment, the army beasts would be left to graze under the supervision of a large number of foraging parties (*'allāfah*).⁶⁹

As long as the 'Abbāsīd army kept to the designated route for its march, the army would seem to face no difficulties concerning water supplies, as water troughs made of skin (*ḥiyāḍ min al-adam*) would be set down along the army's route.⁷⁰

When the 'Abbāsīd forces had to carry out campaigns within the Iraqi territories or in proximal provinces such as the Ḥijāz, Baghdad always seems to have been taken as the provision centre of the forces.⁷¹ But when they were involved in military operations far away from Baghdad, the army commanders took into their consideration the necessity of adopting advance provision bases in which to deposit supplies for all the army's needs. During the conquest campaign against Kamakh (Kamachon) in 149/766, Malatyah, in south-eastern Anatolia, is mentioned as having

⁶⁸Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 33; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 29; Ashtor, "Diet", p. 14; Ahsan, *Social Life*, pp. 108-10.

⁶⁹Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 23, 32, 60, 63; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 62.

⁷⁰Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 70.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, vol. 7, pp. 517, 579.

been the provision base for the ‘Abbāsid forces.⁷² Throughout the final two years of the campaign against the Khurramiyyah forces in Ādharbayjān, from AH 220 to 222, ‘Abbāsid commanders took up the town of Ardabīl, in eastern Ādharbayjān, as the main provision and supply base for their forces.⁷³ Ṭarsūs, a frontier fortresses in Cilicia, is another example of this arrangement. Besides its being a main ransom (*fidā*) centre for the exchange of prisoners between Muslims and Byzantines, it also acted on many occasions as a main provision base for the ‘Abbāsid forces in their land and naval operations against the Byzantine territories.⁷⁴

Protecting the supply and provision caravans was one of those issues to which the ‘Abbāsid commanders gave much attention during their military operations. This task usually rested upon a body of troops best known as the *badhraḡah* (escort party).⁷⁵ The system used by the escorting party in early ‘Abbāsid times is well described in al-Ṭabarī’s account of the war with Bābak al-Khurramī. To protect the caravans of supplies, provisions, as well as Muslims travellers from Khurramiyyah raids, al-Afshīn stationed a rally of cavalry escorts at the fortresses that stretched

⁷²Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 220.

⁷³Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 11–4; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 18. During the campaign of 213/829 against the Khurramiyyah, the ‘Abbāsid forces under the leadership of Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd are reported to have taken the town of al-Hamdāniyyah in Ādharbayjān as their base for provisions and supplies. Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 386.

⁷⁴Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 323, 625; vol. 9, pp. 57, 70; Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 399; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 494; vol. 6, pp. 40, 45; Qudāmāh, *Kharāj*, pp. 186, 310.

⁷⁵Harthamī, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 26; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 13, 15–6. *Badhraḡah* is a word of Persian origin, used to designate the guards who escort caravans. Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘ li-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, vol. 4, p. 158.

between Ardabīl⁷⁶ and his field headquarters in Barzand.⁷⁷ It is said that the caravans would set off from Ardabīl accompanied by an escort until they reached the fortress of Ḥiṣn al-Nahr.⁷⁸ From there, the caravans would be accompanied by ‘Alawayh al- A‘war’s men, the garrison force at the fortress of Ḥiṣn al-Nahr, up to a designated place half-way between Ḥiṣn al-Nahr and the fortress of Arshaq.⁷⁹ There they would meet with al-Haytham al-Ghanawī’s men, the garrison force at the fortress of Arshaq, where the two groups would exchange caravans. Thus, al-Haytham’s men would hand over the caravans they had brought from their own district to ‘Alawayh’s men and the latter would hand over the caravans under their protection to al-Haytham’s men. Should one group arrive at the meeting place before the other, they would not proceed further but rather wait until the other group arrived. After exchanging caravans, ‘Alawayh’s men would escort the caravans back to Ardabīl. Meanwhile, al-Haytham’s men would escort the Caravans under their protection as far as Abū Sa‘īd’s men, the garrison force at the fortress in Kushsh,⁸⁰ who, along with the cravens under their protection, would also be waiting for al-Haytham’s men in a meeting place half-way between Kushsh and Arshaq. There the two groups would also exchange caravans, so that al-Haytham’s men would hand

~~over the caravans under their protection to Abū Sa‘īd’s men and the latter would~~

⁷⁶ A town suited in eastern Ādharbayjān. Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, vol. 1, p. 145; Bosworth, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 33, p. 15; Le Strange, *Lands*, p. 168.

⁷⁷ A town in Mūghān district in Ādharbayjān. Le Strange, *Lands*, pp. 175-6; *El²*, s.v. “Barzan”.

⁷⁸ Situated approximately two farsakhs north-west of Ardabīl. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 14; Bosworth, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 33, p. 18.

⁷⁹ Arshaq was a rural district (*rustāq*) in Mūghān, between Ardabīl and Bardand. Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, vol. 1, p. 152; Bosworth, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 33, p. 17.

under their protection to Abū Sa‘īd’s men and the latter would hand over the caravans accompanying them to al-Haytham’s men. Then al-Haytham’s men would escort the caravans entrusted to them to Arshaq before handing them over next day to ‘Alawayh’s men. Likewise, Abū Sa‘īd’s men would accompany the caravans they protected to Khushsh and then to al-Afshīn’s camp, where the leader of a caravan from al-Afshīn would meet them to receive the caravans and send what they brought to the army headquarters, i.e. al-Afshīn’s camp. From there the supplies and provisions would be distributed to the rest of the army camps, which in this campaign were fifteen in number.⁸¹

Notwithstanding the intricate system of protection for supply caravans put in place by the ‘Abbāsid commanders to ensure the safe flow of supplies to their men, this could not altogether prevent the supply of provisions from sometimes being seriously interrupted. This would be either because of natural causes, such as bad weather or hard terrain, or because of the enemy’s ambush attacks, as was the case during the war with the Khurramiyyah.⁸² When this sort of problem occurred, it usually caused serious exhaustion and hardship for the soldiers as they suffered from lack of water and food.⁸³ The situation would only get worse when the army was accompanied by large numbers of captives, whose feeding not only became a great burden but also a

⁸⁰ A fortress located approximately half-way between Ardabīl and Barzand. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 12; Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, vol. 2, p. 373; Bosworth, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 33, p. 17; Le Strange, *Lands*, p. 317.

Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 12-3, 45.⁸¹

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 12-3, 15-6; K. al-‘Uyūn, p. 385; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, pp. 20-1.

⁸³ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 16, 38, 60; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, pp. 21, 29, 42.

real hazard as the captives might refuse to march or might even seize the opportunity to attack and kill Muslim soldiers before escaping.⁸⁴ Therefore, the most convenient solution that the 'Abbāsid commanders found for this problem was to get rid of the captives by putting them to death, especially the combatants and those who had no noble status. During the campaign of Hārūn al-Rashīd in 165/782, the number of the Byzantine prisoners who were reported to have been killed while captive was 2,090, whereas in the campaign of al-Mu'taṣim in 223/838, the number was as high as 6,000 captives.⁸⁵ As for the booty, the 'Abbāsid commanders would free themselves from the burden of carrying it by selling what they could and setting fire to the rest along with the heavy siege-engines that they had brought with to the battle and would restrain the hurried return of the army.⁸⁶

Beasts used for transporting supplies and provisions differed according to the terrain to be crossed. In desert and in level terrain, camels were primarily employed, but in mountainous regions mules, asses, as well as oxen were commonly used.⁸⁷ In some campaigns the number of pack animals could reach thousands. According to Michel the Syrian, during the campaign against Ammūriyyah in 223/838, the army of al-Mu'taṣim included 50,000 camels as well as 20,000 mules.⁸⁸ These carrying beasts

⁸⁴Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 60.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 135; vol. 9, pp. 60, 70; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 10, p. 165; Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Tārīkh*, p. 393.

⁸⁶*K. al-'Uyūn*, pp. 165, 395; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 65, 69; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 45; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 316.

⁸⁷Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 14, 16, 41,

⁸⁸Vasiliev, *Byzance*, vol. 1, p. 146.

used not only to transport food, fodder, litters, and heavy siege-engines, but also thousands of tents which were used to shelter the troops during their campaign.⁸⁹

Unlike the common soldiers, each of the ‘Abbāsīd senior commanders would be provided with his own private tent (*maḍrab*, or *khaymah*), where he would eat his meals, sleep, interview prisoners, and carry out other duties.⁹⁰

Sea and river vessels were also employed to transport army provisions whenever the operation fronts were in close proximity to the seacoast or a navigable river. On occasions, the army would march along the seacoast while the ships carrying their provisions would sail alongside them.⁹¹

In areas where food sources were very limited, the forces garrisoned there would be provided with food supplies from the nearer rich provinces. In the Ḥijāz, for example, such food provision was usually brought by sea from Iraq and Egypt.⁹²

4.3 Levies, Volunteers and other Supernumerary Fighters

Despite the fact that the Qur’ān stipulates that holy war (*jihād*) is a collective duty,⁹³ the Prophet did not compel the Muslims to serve in the army.⁹⁴ Instead, he only

⁸⁹Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 4, p. 45.

⁹⁰Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 66, 75; Levy, *Social*, p. 444.

⁹¹Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 440; K. al-‘Uyūn, p. 204.

⁹²Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 603, 621; Waines, “Cereals”, p. 264.

⁹³Qur’ān, 2: 216.

exhorted them to the duty of *jihād* and reminded them of the reward appointed for willing participants both here and in the hereafter.⁹⁵ The voluntary principle in army service continued unchanged throughout the time of Abū Bakr and the early years of the Caliph ‘Umar.⁹⁶ Nonetheless, the establishment of the *Dīwān* in 20/640 played a significant role in shifting service in the army from a voluntary to a compulsory basis. Each person who was enlisted in the *Dīwān* and thus received the annual stipend was obligated to present himself for military service whenever his service was required.⁹⁷ In addition to the fact that stipends were an incentive for Muslims at that time to join the army, both faith and courage also made *jihād* a necessity for Muslims, so that they did not unreasonably fail to join the army. They were afraid to be denigrated as cowards and inferior believers.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, starting from the second half of ‘Uthmān’s Caliphate, the outbreak of the political strife between different factions of the Muslim community, the settlement of Muslims in the conquered towns, and consequently their transformation from being warriors into city dwellers all played a part in weakening the enthusiasm of Muslims to join the army.

To deal with this problem and be able to raise the necessary number of warriors for military campaigns, the Muslim authority during the time of the Umayyad Caliphate

⁹⁴Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, p. 106; Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, vol. 1, p. 13; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 114; vol. 3, p. 107.

⁹⁵Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, vol. 3, p. 990.

⁹⁶Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 3, pp. 322, 448.

⁹⁷Ibn Sallām, *Amwāl*, pp. 240-4; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 4, p. 142.

⁹⁸Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 4, p. 142.

tried two sorts of solutions. First, they employed compulsion, most often by threatening those reluctant to enlist that their names would be withdrawn from the *Dihwān* and that their annual stipends would cease. However, with the advent of capable and ruthless governors such as Ziyād b. Abīhi and al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf the threat would be much more serious, as it extended to the death penalty.⁹⁹ The second solution, which was much more convenient, was to subsidize some tribal chiefs and agree terms with them for the provision of warriors when needed. The first four Umayyad Caliphs received a standing draft of 2,000 men from the Qaḥṭān tribe in Syria. In return, each man was paid an annual stipend of 2,000 *dirhams* with the condition that if he died, his son or cousin would be eligible to take his place with the same privileges.¹⁰⁰ Also, after the death of Caliph Yazīd b. al-Walīd in 126/744, Marwān b. Muḥammad allotted stipends for 20,000 men from the Qays tribe and 7,000 from Rabī‘ah to join forces in his struggle against another member of the Umayyad family.¹⁰¹

Under the ‘Abbāsids, the problem of raising the necessary number of fighters remained, but with different characteristics and solutions from those that prevailed in the time of the Umayyads. As the conquest operations came to a halt, the ‘Abbāsīd standing army in Baghdad, whose members were employed in military service as full professionals all the year round, was generally sufficient to carry any necessary military operations within and without the state’s borders under any circumstances

⁹⁹Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 5, p. 222; vol. 6, pp. 204-7; Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, vol. 2, p. 310.

¹⁰⁰Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, p. 95; Levy, *Social Structure*, p. 414.

that might arise.¹⁰² Nonetheless, this did not prevent the ‘Abbāsīd army, on certain occasions, for one reason or another, searching for additional manpower. As a means to repair the shortfall of combatants, the central government resorted to a number of solutions, the first of which was to raise levied forces (*furūd*, sing. *farḍ*). However, these levied forces were of more than one kind. First, there were compulsory levies, but, unlike Umayyad times, they now touched only the wealthy civilians in Muslim society. Such levied troops would virtually join the army at their own expense and thus cost the central Treasury nothing in return for their service. As an example of this procedure, it is reported that in 143/761, when Caliph al-Manṣūr heard that the Daylamites were attacking Muslim territories and killing Muslims on a large scale, he ordered the governor of Baṣrah to make a list of all those who possessed 10,000 *dirhams* or more and to compel them to go forth personally to wage *jihād* against Daylam. The same practice was also adopted with the people of Kūfah.¹⁰³ The second form of levied forces stood on the base of subsidizing men who were willing and capable of bearing arms. But, unlike the Umayyads, the ‘Abbāsīds subsidized these men on a regional rather than a tribal basis. For example, in 159/776, Caliph al-Mahdī allotted stipends for 2,000 men from Baṣrah in order to take part in the military expedition against the people of

¹⁰¹ Ibn Khayyāt, *Tārīkh*, p. 296.

¹⁰² Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 38.

¹⁰³ Basawī, *al-Maʿrifah*, vol. 1, p. 127; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 515; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 86.

Bārbad, in Hind.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, Caliph al-Manṣūr allotted stipends for 400 men from the Jazīrah province who were willing to serve as a garrison force in the frontier town of Malaṭyah.¹⁰⁵ In contrast to the regular troops, however, these levied troops were recruited for certain military assignments and therefore they would receive pay only as long as their services were needed. In 218/ 833, Caliph al-Ma'mūn is said to have raised a levied force from among the districts (*ajnād*, sing. *jund*) of Damascus, Ḥimṣ, Urdunn, Filaṣṭīn, Egypt, Qinnasrīn, Jazīrah, and the people of Baghdad to act as a garrison force in the frontier city of Ṭuwānah. In return, they were allotted a monthly stipend of 100 *dirhams* for each cavalryman and 40 for each member of the infantry. Yet, a few months later, after the death of al-Ma'mūn, the new Caliph, al-Mu'taṣim, ordered the demolition of Ṭuwānah and the dismissal of these levied forces.¹⁰⁶

Besides the regular troops (*murtazaqah*) and the levied forces (*furūd*), the 'Abbāsids also made use of many other fighting elements, who are mentioned, along with their supporting units, in accounts of many of the 'Abbāsīd military operations. Among these were the purely voluntary troops (*mutaṭawwi'ah*). al-Sam'ānī defines the term *mutaṭawwi'ah* within its military-religious context as

¹⁰⁴Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 116; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 234; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 140; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 8, p. 228.

¹⁰⁵Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 191.

¹⁰⁶Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 631; Azdī, *Tārīkh*, pp. 412, 415.

a group who devote themselves to *ghazw* and *djihād*, station themselves in *ribāṭs* along the frontiers (*thughūr*) and who go beyond the call of duty (*taṭawwaʿū*) in *ghazw* and undertake this last in the land of unbelief when it is not incumbent upon them nor is an obvious institution in their land.¹⁰⁷

Unlike the regular troops (*murtazaqah*) or the levied, the *mutaṭawwiʿah* were not enrolled in the *Dīwān* and, hence, were not in receipt of regular allowances (*arzāq*, sing. *rizq*) even while in service. Instead, they would come at their own expense and the only material advantage they received in return for their service would be their share from the captured plunder.¹⁰⁸

As far as the available historical sources indicate, only two occurrences of the term *mutaṭawwiʿah* are found in connection with the active Umayyad forces. The first comes in 79/698 during the campaign against the local ruler of Zābulistān, in eastern Afghanistan, in connection with which a small group of volunteers is mentioned,¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Samʿānī, *Ansāb*, vol. 12, p. 317, (English translation quoted from Bosworth, *EI* ² s.v. "Mutaṭawwiʿa").

¹⁰⁸ Farrāʾ, *Aḥkām*, pp. 39, 152; Māwardī, *Aḥkām*, p. 141; Abū Yūsuf, *Kharāj*, p. 19; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Nihāyah fī ḡharīb al-ḥadīth*, vol. 5, p. 99.

¹⁰⁹ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 6, p. 204; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 6, p. 323; Bosworth, "ʿUbaidallāh b. Abī Bakra", p. 277.

while the second is in 98/717, during the military expedition of Yazīd b. al-Muhallab against Ṭabaristān and Jurjān.¹¹⁰

With the ‘Abbāsids, however, the presence of the *mutaṭawwi‘ah* become much more frequently perceived. In the military expedition against Bārbad, in India, in 159/776, the ‘Abbāsīd forces are mentioned as including 1,500 volunteers who were settled in the frontier garrisons (*murābiṭāt*) as well as 1,000 volunteers from the people of Baṣrah.¹¹¹ After the Byzantines attacked al-Ḥadath and destroyed its wall in 162/779, the ‘Abbāsīds retaliated by sending al-Ḥasan b. Qaḥṭabah in a summer expedition (*ṣā‘īfah*) with 30,000 regular troops (*murtaziqah*), besides volunteers.¹¹² During the summer expedition of 165/782, which was commanded by al-Rashīd, the son of Caliph Maḥdī, the ‘Abbāsīd army is said to have numbered more than 100,000, made up of regular troops, volunteers, and traders.¹¹³ In 190/806, al-Rashīd, having succeeded to the Caliphate, led a military expedition against the Byzantine stronghold of Heraclea. His army was estimated to have consisted of

¹¹⁰Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 6, p. 532; Levy, *Social Structure*, p. 410; *El*², s.v. “Mutaṭawwi‘ah”. It is worth noting that although chronicles indicate that there were a great number of *mawālī* fighting with the Umayyads’ central armies in Khurāsān and that they were not in receipt of the ‘aṭā’, they are never described as *mutaṭawwi‘ah*. Instead, they are simply portrayed as fighters (*muqātilah*) who were unlawfully deprived of their rights. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 6, p. 559; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 4, p. 321.

¹¹¹Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 116-7; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 8, p. 236.

¹¹²Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 242; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 142; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 8, p. 256. Ibn Kathīr (*Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 144) estimates the number of the ‘Abbāsīd forces at 80,000, besides volunteers.

¹¹³Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 153.

135,000 regular troops, in addition to camp-followers (*atbā'*), volunteers, and others who were not registered in the *Dīwān*.¹¹⁴

Unlike earlier times when the majority of volunteers were most likely from among poor bedouin and *mawālī*, the bulk of the volunteers during the early 'Abbāsid period were from among the Arab tribesmen of Iraq, Jazīrah, and Syria. As many found themselves dismissed from the military establishment with the accession of the 'Abbāsids to power and consequently the cessation of their '*aṭā'*' and *rizq*, these tribesmen seem to have had no other option but to enroll as volunteers. This was the only means of access they had to booty, which was always a very important source of income for them. Nevertheless, although the financial motive was a prime concern for many who joined the troops as volunteers, this should not obscure the fact that there were many others who served on religious grounds, as the desire to fulfil the duty of *jihād* was always a significant motive for many. While fighting the rebel forces of Khurramiyyah, one of the *mutaṭawwi'ah*, known to be a pious person, appealed to al-Afshīn saying, "O *Amīr*, do not deprive us of [a chance of] martyrdom, if an opportunity for it has now come to hand! We only intended and sought God's reward and His favour. So leave us alone until we can advance, after receiving your permission, and it may be that God will grant us victory."¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 320; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 8, p. 278; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 341.

¹¹⁵ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 39; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 31 (translation quoted from Bosworth, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 33, p. 63).

Besides taking part in raids into enemy territory or fighting against heretical movements within the Islamic Empire, the role of the *mutaṭṭawwi'ah* was especially important in defending the Islamic frontiers in Syria, Jazīrah, and elsewhere against any retaliatory attacks that enemies might attempt. Hence, we find, for example, that many of the garrison points (*murābiṭāt*) that stretch all along the Muslim-Byzantine border, such as those at the frontier cities of Maṣṣīṣah and al-Hārūniyyah, were manned by a considerable number of *mutaṭṭawwi'ah* along with salaried troops.¹¹⁶ In fact, when the Byzantines carried out a sudden attack on one of the Muslim frontier cities and the men of the *rābiṭah* there desperately needed more manpower, it was not the 'Abbāsīd standing army but rather the *mutaṭṭawwi'ah* who lived within the same province and those nearby who took quick action and rushed to lend their assistance.¹¹⁷ In another example, when the Byzantines attacked the frontier town of Zibaṭrah in 223/838, killing and taking captive many of its people, it was the local inhabitants of the frontier zones of Syria and Jazīrah who first rushed forth to counter the Byzantine assault.¹¹⁸

In spite of the great enthusiasm that some of the volunteers showed on the battlefield, there were of course some disadvantages that the army commanders had to face as a result of having to use volunteers. The most serious of these was that these volunteers were not amenable to military discipline and, while they arrived by

¹¹⁶ Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 197, 202; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 116; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 234; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 140.

¹¹⁷ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 320; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 343.

¹¹⁸ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 59.

choice, they also departed of their own volition. Such being the case, their sustained participation could not be relied upon in lengthy campaigning or strenuous fighting in far-flung or inhospitable terrain. During the military campaign against the rebel forces of Bābak in Ādharbayjān in 222/837, many of the volunteers from Baṣrah, who were under the command of Abū Dulaf al-Qāsim, decided to return home after the final assault on the Khurramiyyah stronghold of al-Badhdh was perceived by them to be overly delayed.¹¹⁹

Even though sources do not discuss the organization of the volunteers within the army structure, it can be concluded that they were separated from the regular troops in detachments of their own, so that their potential lack of discipline would not affect the rest of the army.¹²⁰ Their role on the battlefield seems to have varied between making the initial assault on the enemy's defences, protecting the flanks of the army in combat, and pursuing defeated enemy forces. It is worth noting, however, that it was the volunteers in particular rather than the regular troops who were usually assigned to certain military tasks of a sensitive nature. One of these was single combat (*mubārazah*). In early times, battles would usually commence with individual sword-fighting between the commanders and heroes of each side. By 'Abbāsīd times, however, such matches were stamped out as the 'Abbāsīd commanders apprehended the serious psychological consequences for the spirit of

¹¹⁹ Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 32; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 39; *K. al-'Uyūn*, p. 386.

¹²⁰ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 37-39; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, pp. 31-3.

the whole army if the result was not in their favour.¹²¹ However, on rare occasions when the 'Abbāsid commanders were unwillingly pushed to accept such a challenge, they preferred to give the task to the *mutaṭawwi'ah*. During the siege of Heraclea, for example, one of the Byzantines' heroes is reported to have persistently requested a match against twenty of the Muslim fighters at once. In view of the humiliating nature of this offer, Hārūn al-Rashīd, who was in command, decided to select one of the volunteer warriors to meet the challenge. His reasoning was, as the account reports, that if the Byzantine fighter succeeded in killing his Muslim opponent, it would not have as serious an impact on the spirit of the Muslim regular forces as it would have if a hero or commander of the regular forces met the challenge and was slain. Of course, if the volunteer succeeded in killing his Byzantine rival, it would severely shake the confidence of the Byzantines, realizing that their hero had been killed by one out of the mass of their enemy.¹²²

In addition to the volunteers, the 'Abbāsid army also made use of other elements who were not in receipt of the regular allowance and who were classified while joining the army on a campaign as camp-followers (*atbā'*).¹²³ These camp-followers, who usually took part in the actual fighting, would include slaves, freemen, as well as fellow tribesmen of some of the Arab tribal commanders such as Ma'n b. Zā'idah al-Shaybānī.¹²⁴ Although these three elements fell within the same

¹²¹ K. al-'Uyūn, pp. 343-4; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 78; al-Dimashqī, *Shadharāt*, vol. 1, p. 190.

¹²² Ḥafṣahānī, *Aghānī*, vol. 18, pp. 251-3.

¹²³ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 320; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 8, p. 278; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 249.

al-Shaybānī.¹²⁴ Although these three elements fell within the same category as they joined the campaign on behalf of their patron, they differed in regard to their financial status. While slaves had no legal right to any financial privileges including a share from the booty, the freeman and fellow-tribesmen might sometimes be given their expenses (*naḥqāṭ*) while on campaign, as well as their legal share in the booty.¹²⁵

The ‘Abbāsids’ search for more manpower in time of crisis was not limited to their employment of volunteers and camp-followers in their armies but went to the extreme of recruiting convicted criminals (*ahl al-maḥābis*).¹²⁶ Of course, not all of these prisoners were pickpockets and civil offenders, but, in fact, the vast majority seem to have been highly skilled fighters and were probably highway robbers and rebel forces who were ready at this point to do anything to obtain their freedom. By this device the ‘Abbāsids were able to put more fighters on the battlefield without bearing any additional financial charges and, at the same time, to rid themselves of these trouble-makers.

The earliest reference to such action relates to the year 139/757 when by the order of Caliph al-Manṣūr, al-‘Abbās b. Ṣāliḥ transferred many released prisoners to the

¹²⁴ Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 385; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 65.

¹²⁵ Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 310.

newly-restored frontier town of Maşşīṣah to act as a garrison against any Byzantine attack.¹²⁷ In 147/764, Caliph al-Manşūr is said to have ordered the release of thousands of prisoners to support the army in stopping the advance of the Khazars of Armenia, who had crossed the Islamic frontiers after a series of victories over ‘Abbāsīd forces.¹²⁸ Similarly, to assemble an army to face the rebel forces of Muḥammad b. ‘Utāb in Armenia, in 214/829, the ‘Abbāsīd commander, Khālīd b. Yazīd al-Shaybānī, sought the release from Iraqī jails of all those prisoners from amongst his tribe who later joined him in his campaign.¹²⁹ During the final campaign against the Zuṭṭ in the marshlands of southern Iraq in 219/834, ‘Ujayf b. ‘Anbasah is said to have employed to great effect the Egyptians who had been taken captive from the Delta during the disturbances of 214/829. According to one source, because of the close similarity between their homeland and that of the Zuṭṭ, the Egyptians were able to swim swiftly like fish through the swamp and attack the ambushes of the Zuṭṭ.¹³⁰

Defending the cities that lay within the territories that were under the direct control of the central government from rebel forces was not always the task of the regular

¹²⁶It should be noted that the use of convicts was not an ‘Abbāsīd innovation, since it is reported that this practice was also made use of by the Umayyads. Thus, it is reported that the 4,000 men who formed Sa‘īd b. ‘Uthmān’s army during his campaign in Khurāsān in 56/676 were troublesome elements from Baṣrah who had been jailed. Likewise, it is reported that Sa‘īd persuaded a group of highway robbers from the tribe of Tamīm to join him on his expedition. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 5, pp. 305-6; Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, vol. 22, p. 298; Shaban, *Revolution*, p. 38.

¹²⁷Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 387; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 196-7; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 509; Qudāmāh, *Kharāj*, p. 308; Bosworth, “Byzantium”, p. 57.

¹²⁸Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, pp. 371-2; Basawī, *al-Ma‘rifah*, vol. 1, p. 132; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 7.

¹²⁹Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 464.

troops. Instead, the central government sought sometimes to recruit some of the local inhabitants of certain areas, especially those within close proximity to rebel bases, for this purpose. One such case was the city of Mawṣil, in Jazīrah province. During much of the rule of the first four ‘Abbāsīd Caliphs, the garrison point (*rābiṭah*) in Mawṣil was manned mainly by a local militia. It was about 2,000 strong, although the force is reported to have consisted of as many as 4,000 warriors during the campaign against the Taghlib tribe in the province in 171/787.¹³¹ These troops’ prime duty was to defend the city against the aggression of the Khārijites, though they were on occasion used in disciplinary tax-gathering campaigns among the local tribes.¹³² Although no reference is made to any regular allowance being paid to these local militias, nonetheless they most likely received a special grant while on active service.¹³³ With the exception of some isolated cases, these local militia were commanded at most times by leading members of the local community whose names are on record.¹³⁴ In spite of the relative strength of their numbers, the local militias, equally with the central forces, were subjected to a series of defeats at the hands of the Khārijites.¹³⁵

¹³⁰ Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, vol. 3, p. 84.

¹³¹ Azdī, *Tārīkh*, pp. 177, 194, 267; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 632; vol. 8, p. 7.

¹³² Azdī, *Tārīkh*, pp. 177, 195, 268; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 7; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 98; Kennedy, “Central Government”, p. 30.

¹³³ Kennedy, “Central Government”, p. 30.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 31-2.

¹³⁵ Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 114; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 495; Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 164.

4.4 Exchange of Captives

One of the ultimate outcomes of the continuous military confrontations between the Muslims and their Byzantine neighbours was the accumulation of captives by both sides. Interestingly enough, despite the extensive marine and land operations between the two rivals during the Umayyad Caliphate, Muslim sources make no mention of any significant ransom operations between the two. In fact, when speaking of the ransom operations between Muslims and the Byzantines, al-Mas'ūdī explains this phenomenon by indicating that ransom operations and exchanges of prisoners of war in Umayyad times did not acquire an official character in the eyes of the central governments of either side. In other words, ransom operations were often carried out between the two at the level of the army commanders shortly after the conclusion of battles. Likewise, whenever a number of captives became available on either side, even if it was insignificant, direct contact would be made between the two local authorities across the border to coordinate the exchange operation without any kind of intervention from the central government. Such procedure used to deprive these ransom acts of the state's official stamp of approval and, consequently, of the national ceremonial celebrations and publicity which eventually would attract the attention of all the subjects of the state.¹³⁶

However, from the beginning of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate, and despite the dramatic decline of military operations between the Muslims and the Byzantines, the era witnessed the organization of ransom procedures between the two, which were

¹³⁶Mas'ūdī, *al-Tanbīh*, p. 189.

referred to by Muslim historians as *afdāyah* (sing. *fidā*).¹³⁷ It is worth noting, however, that one of the distinctive features of the ransoming operations during early ‘Abbāsid times was that most of the captives exchanged between the two sides were not members of the standing army. Besides the volunteers (*mutaṭawwi‘ah*), the vast majority were in fact civilians, who included women and children, especially from amongst those living in the frontier towns.¹³⁸ The only explanation for the paucity of members of the standing army amongst those ransomed is that Muslims and Byzantines alike, on most occasions after any military confrontation, would put to death those fighters who were captured.¹³⁹ The motivation for this might have been the mutual intention to deprive the other side of the future participation of such well-trained troops. We may add to this the assumption that such well-drilled fighters were not much sought for in the slave markets, as it was most likely difficult to rehabilitate them for use in domestic services. Therefore, exchanging captives between the two sides involved a considerable number of civilians, who are referred to in Islamic sources as *sabāya* (sing. *sabī*). Whereas some were sold as slaves, the

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 189-95; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, pp. 315, 339; Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, pp. 482, 490; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 8, p. 22; vol. 9, p. 163; al-Dimashqī, *Shadharāt*, vol. 1, p. 321; Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, vol. 1, p. 55; vol. 5, p. 8; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, vol. 9, p. 294; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 500; vol. 8, p. 318; vol. 9, pp. 57, 143-5; Ibn Khayyāt, *Tārīkh*, pp. 365, 395; Dhahabī, *al-Ibar*, vol. 1, p. 302; Ibn Taghribirdī, *al-Nujūm*, vol. 2, p. 259; *El Suppl.*, s.v. “Fidā”.

¹³⁸ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 55, 143; Mas‘ūdī, *Tanbih*, pp. 190-4; Ibn Khayyāt, *Tārīkh*, p. 395; Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 482.

¹³⁹ For some examples, see Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 152, 339; vol. 9, p. 70. While writing of the ransom of 231/846, al-Ṭabarī (*Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 143) relates that one of the released Muslims, whose name was Muḥammad b. ‘Abdallāh al-Ṭarsūsī, was taken captive by the Byzantines 30 years previously while taking part in a Muslim raid against the Byzantines. Al-Ṭabarī, however, notes that the man was not, in fact a fighter but a member of one of the foraging parties (*‘allāfah*).

remainder were kept as captives pending forthcoming ransom operations.¹⁴⁰ With regard to captives of noble status, they would be kept for future exchanges of prisoners or, on occasion, they would be repatriated as a gesture of good intent on the part of the releasing side.¹⁴¹

It seems that the first exchange of captives between the ‘Abbāsids and the Byzantines took place in 139/757, in the time of Caliph al-Manṣūr, when the Caliph is reported to have ransomed (*fadā*) the Muslims who had been taken captive by the Byzantines after the latter’s successful campaign at the frontier towns of Malatyah and Qālīqalā in 133/751.¹⁴² Nevertheless, this first initiative between the two opponents remained a unique incident until the second ransom occasion followed during the reign of al-Mahdī, which was arranged by the ‘Abbāsīd commander al-Naqqāsh al-Anṭākī.¹⁴³ The third ransom act took place in 181/797 during the reign of Caliph al-Rashīd, this time was under the supervision of ‘Ayyād b. Sinān, the governor of the Syrian frontiers.¹⁴⁴ The fourth happened shortly thereafter, in 189/805, and was described by Muslim historians as the greatest in scale, to the

¹⁴⁰Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 142.

¹⁴¹Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 342; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 321, 628.

¹⁴²Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 236; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 119; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 74; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 500.

¹⁴³Mas‘ūdī, *Tanbīh*, p. 195. Al-Naqqāsh might be ‘Īsā b. Kathīr al-Naqqāsh. See Ibn Khayyāt, *Tārīkh*, p. 340.

¹⁴⁴Mas‘ūdī, *Tanbīh*, p. 195; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 315.

extent that no single Muslim captive was left in the hands of the Byzantines.¹⁴⁵ On this occasion, al-Qāsim b. al-Rashīd and Abū Salīm al-Khādim are mentioned as those responsible for arranging the exchange of captives on behalf of the Muslims. The number of Muslim captives released under this agreement is estimated at over 3,700, while the number of government personnel, religious figures, and common people who attended the act exceeded 500,000.¹⁴⁶ The third ransom operation during the Caliphate of al-Rashīd took place in 192/ 808, when the Caliph entrusted Thābit b. Naṣr b. Mālik, the governor of Syria, to supervise the operation on behalf of the Muslims. The number of Muslims who were ransomed on this occasion was 2,500 including males and females.¹⁴⁷ The last ransom act between the Muslims and the Byzantines during the first century of the ‘Abbāsid Caliphate took place in 231/846 during the reign of al-Wāthiq, when the number of Muslim captives involved is estimated to have been 4,740.¹⁴⁸

Al-Mas‘ūdī counts up the recognized and famous ransom operations from the beginning of the ‘Abbāsid Caliphate to the year of 335/948 as 18.¹⁴⁹ It is, not

¹⁴⁵ Dhahabī, *al-Ibar*, vol. 1, p. 302; Dimashqī, *Shadharāt*, vol. 1, p. 321; Mas‘ūdī, *Tanbīh*, p. 189; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 189; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 318.

¹⁴⁶ Mas‘ūdī, *Tanbīh*, p. 189.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 190; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 338.

¹⁴⁸ Mas‘ūdī, *Tanbīh*, p. 190; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 144; Ibn Khayyāt, *Tārīkh*, p. 395; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm*, vol. 2, p. 259; Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 482.

¹⁴⁹ Mas‘ūdī, *Tanbīh*, pp. 189-95.

surprising, then, if the 'Abbāsids established a certain pattern in dealing with and releasing captives.¹⁵⁰

The camp of the prisoners during the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate was usually divided into two sections: one for high-ranking persons and the other for common people.¹⁵¹

Before any ransom act could take place between the Muslims and the Byzantines, delegations from both sides would be dispatched. These delegations, normally composed of renowned religious and court personages, would discuss every detail of the ransom, including the number of captives to be exchanged, their ages, gender, social status, and the exact date and place for the ransom to take place.¹⁵² During the first century of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate, the ransoming between the two sides was usually conducted in Western Cilicia by the River Lamos, which was the boundary between Muslim and Byzantine territory.¹⁵³ The Muslims and their captives would stand on the east bank and the Byzantines would be on the west bank, thus allowing better control over the process of ransoming and avoiding any possible clash between the two armies. The ransom act was carried out in a very organized manner. Before commencing the exchange of captives, each party would erect his own bridge over

¹⁵⁰ Al-Mas'ūdī (*Tanbīh*, p. 195) states that in his (lost) book *al-Istidhkār limā jarā fī Sālif al-A'ṣār*, he has thoroughly explained each of the ransom acts that took place between the Muslims and the Byzantines, the attendants from both sides, the detailed procedures, the mediators from each side, as well as the conditions and the amount spent on each act. Since this book is no longer extant, we have relied on the available fragmentary information to be found, especially the comments of al-Ṭabarī while discussing the ransom that took place in 231/846, in order to put together as much information as possible relating to the organization and procedures followed in ransom operations.

¹⁵¹ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 69.

¹⁵² Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 482; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 141-2.

¹⁵³ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 1, p. 55; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 57; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, pp. 482, 490; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 315; Iṣṭakhrī, *Masālik*, p. 69.

the river for the simultaneous reciprocation of captives, so that the Muslims would send their captives over their bridge while the Byzantines would send their Muslim prisoners over the bridge that they had built.¹⁵⁴ Every time the Byzantines released a Muslim captive, the Muslims in return would release a Byzantine captive equivalent to him in age, status, and physical condition.¹⁵⁵ Whenever a released Muslim reached the bank on which the Muslim receivers stood, he would invoke the name of Allah (i.e. pronounce the *takbīr*) and the Muslim receivers would do the same. The Byzantines followed a similar practice, but according to their own beliefs and in their own language.¹⁵⁶ Although the number of prisoners exchanged between the two sides was not considerable in most of the ransoming operations, the ransom process would often take a long time, sometimes requiring several days to complete.¹⁵⁷ Besides the great care taken by each side to ensure that each of the pairs of captives exchanged were physical and social equivalents, each party would also take great care to investigate the identity of the captives they received.¹⁵⁸ This was probably to ensure that no intruder or enemy spy would be able to penetrate their ranks by means of the exchange.

Finally, it should be noted that not all the captives from the Muslim side were Muslims. In fact, on many occasions a good number of the captives were non-

¹⁵⁴ Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 482; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 142; Ibn al-'Ibrī, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 245.

¹⁵⁵ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 142.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 144; Ibn al-'Ibrī, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 245.

¹⁵⁷ For example, the ransom of 189/805 took 12 days to complete the process of exchanging the 3,700 Muslim captives, while seven days were required to exchange around 2,500 Muslim captives during the ransom of 192/808. For more details, see al-Mas'ūdī, *Tanbīh*, pp. 190-4.

Muslim protected 'People of the Book' (*Dhimmīs*) who lived within the Muslim territories. Although the vast majority of these *Dhimmī* captives were Christians, the Byzantine authority considered them as part of the Muslim society and thus always looked on them with suspicion.¹⁵⁹ Hence, the responsibility of freeing the *Dhimmī* prisoners rested upon the Muslim authority.¹⁶⁰ It should be noted, however, that the Muslims in their turn did not consider the ransom of those Christian citizens as part of the "Islamic ransom".¹⁶¹ Instead, they perceived their release simply as an act of barter, as Muslims were not obligated to exchange them for prisoners of war, but for slaves who did not belong to the same race or religion as that of the enemy.¹⁶²

In the event that the number of Muslim captives in the hands of the Byzantines exceeded that of the Byzantine captives held by the Muslims, the 'Abbāsīd government would resort to the solution of buying Byzantine slaves from the slave market in Baghdad. If the number remained insufficient, then some of the 'Abbāsīd courtiers, including the Caliph himself, would on occasion donate some of the aged Rūmī females serving in their palaces to be included in the ransom. That is why

¹⁵⁸Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 144.

¹⁵⁹There is no doubt that this attitude sprang from the fact that some of the Christian communities, such as the Jarājīmah, used to carry out intelligence activities for the Muslims.

¹⁶⁰Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 143; Mas'ūdī, *Tanbīh*, p. 191.

¹⁶¹Mas'ūdī (*Tanbīh*, p. 191) explains this by stating, "The Rūmīs had more than 100 Christian captives who were taken from the Muslim territory. They were exchanged for non-Muslim (*a'lāḥ*), as the ransom cannot be made nor concluded over a Christian."

"وكان مع الروم من النصاري المأسورين من أرض الإسلام مائة رجل ونيف فعضوا مكائهم عدة أعلاج إذا كان الفداء لا يقع على نصرائي ولا يعقد."

¹⁶²Mas'ūdī, *Tanbīh*, p. 191.

most of the time the Byzantine delegation insisted on the exclusion of old men and women and juveniles from being among their released captives.¹⁶³

4.5 Command and Ranks

The overall command of the Islamic armies always belonged to the Caliph, if not actually so, then at least in theory, by virtue of his being the supreme leader (*amīr*) of the Muslim community not only in prayer, but also in all mundane affairs, including warfare. With the exception of Caliph ‘Alī, who commanded in person his forces during the civil war battles,¹⁶⁴ none of the orthodox nor Umayyad Caliphs is reported to have led in person the Muslim armies while occupying the seat of the Caliphate. This practice, however, changed during the time of the early ‘Abbāsīd Caliphs, who seem to have been eager to gain religious prestige for their rule. Thus, from the time of Caliph al-Mahdī until the reign of al-Mu‘taṣim, it became more common to see ‘Abbāsīd Caliphs take personal command not only of the pilgrimage expeditions, but also of their armies during military campaigns, particularly those directed at the Byzantine front, which, for Muslims, retained a distinct religious tinge, as being the earliest and most convenient front for *jihād*.¹⁶⁵ Hence, for example, Caliph al-Rashīd, who led in person his armies more than once against the Byzantines, is said to have adopted a cap (*qalansuwah*) inscribed with the words “Warrior for the Faith,

¹⁶³Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 142.

¹⁶⁴Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, pp. 146, 155, 205; Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, pp. 182, 187; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 4, pp. 506, 563.

¹⁶⁵Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 144, 321-2, 623-5; vol. 9, p. 57; Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, pp. 390, 401; Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, pp. 396, 428, 465, 475.

Pilgrim” (*ghāzī, ḥājī*), which he used to wear when setting out to war against the Byzantines.¹⁶⁶

Besides taking personal command of their armies, the early ‘Abbāsīd Caliphs also initiated a custom in connection with the command of their armies, that of sending their sons, particularly their heirs apparent, to lead the military expeditions. This time, the objective of the ‘Abbāsīds was not so much to put a religious stamp on their rule as it was to stress the right of their heirs apparent to the throne, and also to create ties of allegiance between the army with its commanders and the future Caliphs.¹⁶⁷ Oftentimes, however, the Caliphs’ sons who took command of military campaigns lacked the necessary military experience, basically because of their youthfulness. For instance, when Caliph al-Mahdī sent his son al-Rashīd to lead a major campaign against the Byzantines in 163/780, he was no more than 15 years old.¹⁶⁸ Therefore, to compensate for their lack of experience and in order to guarantee the greatest chance of success, the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphs would review their commanders and advisers and choose the most trustworthy and experienced in warfare to accompany their sons.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 321.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 14, 16, 286, 366.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 230; Kennedy, *‘Abbāsīd Caliphate*, p. 107; Bosworth, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 30, p. 92, n. 350.

¹⁶⁹ Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 244; Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 396; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 145; Ibn Kathīr, *Bayān*, vol. 10, p. 155.

Next to the Caliph in the chain of command came the *quwwād* (sing. *qā'id*), a term that could be translated as 'commanders' or 'generals'. With the exception of some isolated cases, the command of the Muslim armies throughout the early period of Islam and the Umayyad Caliphate was almost entirely in the hands of Arab personnel. Under the 'Abbāsids, however, the ethnicity of the commanders who served in the armies during the first century of their rule was subject to variation as a consequence of the changing elements that composed the army during that period. During the first half century of 'Abbāsid rule, when the Arabs were the dominant component of the army, most of the high-ranking commanders were drawn from families of Arab origin who had previously settled in Khurāsān. The circle of command in those days also comprised some members of the 'Abbāsid family as well as some Arab tribal chiefs, who would take with them some of their tribesmen when they joined the standing army in a campaign or when the authority gave them absolute charge to carry out a military task such as crushing an internal rebellion.¹⁷⁰

The distinctive role of the Arabs in army command went into eclipse in the time of Caliph al-Ma'mūn, when command of the army fell into the hands of non-Arab personnel drawn from Khurāsān and Transoxania.¹⁷¹ Nevertheless, it was not long before the army command shifted again, to concentrate finally in the hands of the Turks, who by the time of al-Mu'taṣim, constituted the bulk of the 'Abbāsid troops.

¹⁷⁰ Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, pp. 372-3, 385, 464; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 30, 65.

¹⁷¹ Ayalon, "Reform", p. 5; Fukuzo, *'Abbāsid Autocracy*, pp. 130-4.

Until the entry of Turks into the ‘Abbāsīd military establishment, the most distinctive feature of the ‘Abbāsīd military command was that it passed hereditarily from fathers to sons.¹⁷² Throughout the first half century of ‘Abbāsīd rule, the high-ranking command of the ‘Abbāsīd forces was concentrated in a handful of prominent military families whose service to the ‘Abbāsīds could be traced back to the days of the revolt in Khurāsān.¹⁷³ In general, senior appointments in the army command were based most often on political considerations more than on the military qualifications of particular persons. In his *Risālah* to Caliph al-Manṣūr concerning the Khurāsānī troops, Ibn al-Muqaffa‘, for example, points out that there were among the lower ranks men whose qualities and military skills were better than those of their commanders. Because of that, Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ advises the Caliph that he might consider promoting those unknown troops in rank, which would not only be extremely beneficial for the common soldiers, but also for the commanders over them.¹⁷⁴

One of the most serious problems related to military command under the early ‘Abbāsīds was the extent of authority that the commander-in-chief really had over his army during the military campaign. Such a problem did not actually crystallize during small-scale military campaigns, in which the role of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliph was usually limited to appointing one of his trusted commanders to carry out a particular military task such as routing small military revolts in various parts of the state. Most

¹⁷²Jahshiyārī, *Wuzarā’*, p. 291.

¹⁷³For some biography of these families, see Kennedy, *‘Abbāsīd Caliphate*, pp. 78-85.

often, the chosen commander, for his part, did not find a ready-made army, but had to assemble his army by his own means. In such cases, the participating troops would usually be made up of the commander's own relatives, *mawālī*, members of his own tribe, and citizens of the region or town to which the commander belonged.¹⁷⁵ From this motley company, the commander would appoint all the military and administrative officers in his army. Thus, no command problems could occur since the commander-in-chief had, in effect from the beginning, the overall authority relating to all the administrative and military affairs of his troops during the campaigns.

By contrast, however, the matter was not that simple with great military campaigns, as the organization procedures were somewhat different. Besides appointing the commander-in-chief, the 'Abbāsīd Caliph would also intervene personally in appointing the army sub-division commanders, the administrators who would supervise and direct the financial and administrative affairs of the campaign, and, finally, the courtiers who would accompany the army. In the midst of this mixture of influential personages who derived their power directly from the Caliph, the commander-in-chief would usually find himself virtually without any real authority over the army he commanded, starting from financial and administrative matters up to the authority to appoint or dismiss the military officers under his command.¹⁷⁶ It is noted that in the military campaign against the Byzantines in 159/775, the

¹⁷⁴ Ibn al-Muqaffā', *Risālah*, p. 123.

¹⁷⁵ Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, pp. 93, 116; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 462, 498.

¹⁷⁶ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 29-30.

‘Abbāsīd commander-in-chief had no authority whatsoever over the army’s vanguard commander, who was appointed by Caliph al-Mahdī and came to be one of the Caliph’s personal servants.¹⁷⁷

Initially, this intervention and undermining of the authority of the commander-in-chief was enough reason for many of the leading ‘Abbāsīd commanders to seek, under one pretext or another, abstention when charged by the Caliph to command an army that comprised other prominent commanders or influential courtiers.¹⁷⁸ In course of time, however, the dilemma started to assume a dangerous cast. This was not only because of the strife and jealousy between the participating commanders, but also because of the deep dissatisfaction which began to emerge among some commanders with respect to the Caliph himself, who would give more authority during a military campaign to certain favoured commanders rather than to others. Historical sources indicate, for example, that one of the reasons why the ‘Abbāsīd commander ‘Ujayf b. ‘Anbasah conspired with other commanders to assassinate Caliph Mu‘taṣim during the ‘Ammūriyyah campaign in 223/838, was his dissatisfaction with the Caliph, who did not give him a free hand regarding expenditure on salaries and supplies as he had done in respect of his commander al-Afshīn.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 144-5.

¹⁷⁹ Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 46; *K. al-‘Uyun*, p. 396; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 71.

Usually, the problem of authority for the commander-in-chief would come to a very satisfactory point in times of crisis, when the Caliph was deeply committed to gaining victory over his enemies. Then, in order to boost the morale of his commander, he would hand over all the military and administrative authority related to the campaign to his commander. On occasions, this authority would include the power of choosing the army sub-division commanders, free access to the arsenals and Treasury, as well as the authority to determine the rate of salary to be paid to the troops participating in the campaign.¹⁸⁰

Frequently, the role of the 'Abbāsid Caliph, if not personally in command of his army, would not end with the appointment of the military commanders and administrators participating in the campaign, but would extend to monitoring the progress of the campaign in all its stages. Sometimes, the Caliph would ask his commander to report to him daily, giving full details concerning everything that was happening on the war front.¹⁸¹ This, in turn, enabled the Caliph to remain in constant touch with his army, to the extent that he would sometimes direct the march of the army and also draw up the military procedures to be taken by his commander such as during encampment in a hostile area.¹⁸²

One aspect of the changed basis of the Muslim army in the early days of Islam and under the Umayyad Caliphate on the one hand, and under the 'Abbāsids on the other,

¹⁸⁰ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 405.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 422; vol. 9, p. 8.

¹⁸² Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 29; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 31.

is the change in the way the army was organized and commanded respectively in peacetime and war. While, under the orthodox Caliphs and in Umayyad times, the organization had been on a tribal basis,¹⁸³ under the early 'Abbāsīd Caliphate the manner of organizing and commanding the Muslim army was completely altered. No longer were the Muslim armies recruited, organized, and commanded according to a tribal basis, but rather according to a geographical arrangement. From the very beginning of their armed revolt in 129/747, the 'Abbāsīds organized their Khurāsānī troops according to military contingents, each of which consisted of warriors from a group of villages in close proximity to each other or from the same town or district in which they resided in Khurāsān and other eastern provinces.¹⁸⁴ Usually, these military contingents were commanded by leaders of the local community from which each contingent was raised, many of whom were pro-'Abbāsīd activists during the propaganda (*da'wah*) period. For better control as well as to facilitate the organization of the troops in peacetime and war, each contingent seems to have been divided from the very beginning of 'Abbāsīd rule into a number of smaller units, each of which consisted of about 1,000 men.¹⁸⁵ Each of these smaller units was in turn entrusted for all time to the direct command of a military leader (*qa'id*), who

¹⁸³ See, e.g., Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 3, pp. 488-9; vol. 4, p. 48; Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 2, p. 349.

¹⁸⁴ Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, pp. 16-22; *Akhbār*, pp. 277-8, 281, 293, 330, 335, 339; Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, p. 361; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 355, 357, 366, 386, 463, 498; vol. 8, p. 29.

¹⁸⁵ *Akhbār*, pp. 337, 351; Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh*, vol. 1, p. 77; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 527; vol. 8, pp. 210, 410.

most likely had a very close attachment with his men, and a second officer (*ra'īs*), who was in charge of affairs of a non-technical military nature.¹⁸⁶

Organizing and commanding the 'Abbāsīd forces according to a geographical basis continued to be the only technique until the introduction of Central Asian troops on a large scale in the time of Caliph al-Mu'taṣim (218-227/833-842). Because most of the Central Asian troops who served at the end of the first century of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate lacked any homeland tie, either on account of their enslavement or because of their nomadic mode of life, the 'Abbāsīd authority appears to have adopted a new technique in addition to the one already in use. While the troops with homeland ties, such as the Khurāsānīs, the Farāghinah, the Ushrūsanīyah, and the Ishtīkhajīyah, were organized on a geographical basis, the Central Asian troops who had no homeland tie were organized racially (by *jins*) as they were indiscriminately identified as Turks (*Atrāk*).¹⁸⁷ Moreover, unlike the Khurāsānīs, Farāghinah, Ishtīkhajīyah, and Ushrūsunīyah, who were commanded by leaders of their local communities,¹⁸⁸ the unrooted troops were divided into groups, each of which was

¹⁸⁶ Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 20; Lassner, *Shaping*, p. 213; al-'Alī, *Baghdād*, vol. 1, p. 160.

¹⁸⁷ Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, pp. 29, 30, 32; Fukuzo, *'Abbāsīd Autocracy*, p. 148.

¹⁸⁸ Among these leaders were Khāqān 'Urṭūj Abū al-Faṭḥ b. Khāqān and al-Afshīn b. Ḥaydar b. Kāwūs. Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, pp. 28-30, 32.

entrusted for all time to a Turkish military leader, who himself lacked any geographical tie owing to his past life as a slave.¹⁸⁹

Although we lack any direct information describing the chain of command in the early 'Abbāsid armies and the number of troops under each rank, such information may still be deduced from notes relating to the chain of command of the armed vagrants ('*ayyārūn*, sing. '*ayyār*')¹⁹⁰ who fought alongside Caliph al-Amīn in Baghdad during the civil war and whose military organization must have been imitative of that used by the 'Abbāsid central forces at that time. According to different sources of information, the vagrant forces were organized on a base of ten: over every ten men was an '*arīf*' (pl. '*urafā*'), over every ten '*urafā*' of 100 men was a '*naqīb*' (pl. '*nuqabā*'), over every ten '*nuqabā*' of 1,000 men was a '*qā'id*' (pl. '*quwwād*'), and over every ten '*quwwād*' of 10,000 men was an '*amīr*'.¹⁹¹

Another indication of the changed basis of command in the Muslim army in early 'Abbāsid times is the absence of a deputy (*khalīfah*) to the commander-in-chief. One of the common military procedures during the early days of Islam and under the Umayyad Caliphate was that, whenever the army set out to war, it was headed by a

¹⁸⁹ Among the Turkish commanders who lacked any homeland attachment on account of their former enslavement were Ashnās, Aytākh, Waṣīf, and Simā al-Dīmaṣḥī. Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, pp. 27, 29, 30, 32.

¹⁹⁰ For more discussion on the '*ayyārūn*', see *Elr*, s.v. "'ayyār'".

commander-in-chief, under whom the Caliph or the commander-in-chief himself would also name a deputy, who would take charge of the army in case the commander was killed, wounded, or dismissed.¹⁹² Without specific rules, the number of deputies usually varied from one battle to another, depending very much on how much the army was determined to achieve victory over the enemy at any cost. In the decisive battle of Nahāwand in 21/642, for example, the Muslim army is mentioned to have had seven deputies, who were to succeed the commander-in-chief one by one.¹⁹³

The importance of the deputy in the army became obvious to the ‘Abbāsids as early as the time of their revolt. After the sudden death of Qaḥṭabah, the commander-in-chief of the ‘Abbāsīd forces in the battle of upper Fallūjah in 132/750, the ‘Abbāsīd forces almost fell into disarray. So, in order to maintain the morale of their forces and set right the situation, the commanders of the army had to meet immediately to discuss the matter, before finally deciding to appoint Ḥumayd, the son of Qaḥṭabah, who, according to some sources, accepted the position unwillingly.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, p. 411. This military arrangement agrees, at least approximately, with what al-Balādhurī (*Futūḥ*, p. 186) mentions while describing the troop settlement in the frontier town of Malaṭyah. He points out that each ‘*arāḥ*’ was composed of between ten and 15 men. Moreover, very many passages indicate that an ‘Abbāsīd *qā’id* was commonly in command of 1,000 troops, see Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 390, 527; vol. 8, pp. 441, 581-2; *Akḥbār*, pp. 337, 351; Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh*, vol. 1, p. 77.

¹⁹² Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 3, pp. 40-1, 489, 531; vol. 5, pp. 209, 550, 596.

¹⁹³ Dīnawarī, *Akḥbār*, p. 135; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 4, p. 119; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 371.

¹⁹⁴ *Akḥbār*, p. 371; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 414.

Although the ‘Abbāsids realized the importance of a deputy to the commander since that incident, there is no proof that they sought to resolve this military dilemma. To the contrary, all historical indications are to the effect that whenever an ‘Abbāsīd commander-in-chief was killed on the battlefield, the whole campaign would cease until the Caliph sent against the same enemy another army under a new commander.

¹⁹⁵ On occasions, however, the new commander might use some of the routed soldiers at the rear of his army just as ‘padding’ to increase the number of his forces in the eyes of his enemy.¹⁹⁶

Summary

In this chapter, dealing with the administration of the early ‘Abbāsīd army, we have discussed in turn the means of military communication, army supplies and provisioning, levies, volunteers and other supernumerary troops, exchange of captives, and finally army command and ranks.

Under the first of these topics, we have considered the use of mounted post-riders; carrier-pigeons; fire and smoke signals; the use of drums, trumpets, and banners; and the shooting of arrows.

The speed of the *barīd* by means of mounted riders in early ‘Abbāsīd times was highly efficient in peacetime and reached an optimum peak of performance in wartime, when the authority tended to shorten the distance between the postal stages

¹⁹⁵ Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 29, 30, 142, 412, 416; Azdī, *Tārīkh*, pp. 373-4, 391.

and supply these stages with more mounts. Apart from transmitting messages, the mounted *barīd* service was also used for delivering military reinforcements much more swiftly to the battlefield. In addition to horses, camels and mules were also employed in the postal service, usually in accordance with the terrain and climate in each region of the state. Carrier-pigeons were also used in transmitting messages as early as the time of Caliph al-Rashīd. They are referred to frequently in ‘Abbāsīd literary works, where we find information on their breeds, the methods of their training, and the manner of their use. To transmit messages between army commanders and their troops during marches, drums, trumpets, or banners might also be employed. Drums, for example, were used to keep order on the march, especially when long distances and difficult terrain separated different companies of the army, so that when the drums ceased beating the whole army would halt on the spot. Finally, in emergencies, when no other means of communication was possible, arrows might be shot containing messages, perhaps from a besieged city.

Turning to the topic of army supplies and the provisioning system, we have noted the changes that occurred to the system under the early ‘Abbāsīds. These were principally on account of the changes that occurred to the system of *‘aṭā’* and, consequently, the way warriors were recruited and how they served in the Muslim army. Unlike the early days of Islam and under the Umayyads when recipients of the *‘aṭā’* were fully responsible for provisioning themselves with necessary food and arms when called to service, under the *artizāq* system of the ‘Abbāsīds it was the state that was responsible for provisioning the troops in time of war.

¹⁹⁶Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 30.

In addition to the supplies that the ‘Abbāsīd army would take with it when it set out to war, it would also obtain others through two different sources: as contributions from fellow Muslim whose towns and villages lay near the battlefield or as direct or indirect plunder from the enemy.

The diet of the ‘Abbāsīd troops during campaigns varied according to the phase of the campaign itself. Thus, while the soldiers enjoined freshly cooked meat during encampment, they would survive mainly on dried food during the march and breaks in fighting.

Despite the elaborate system that early ‘Abbāsīd commanders adopted during their long military campaigns to ensure the safe and constant flow of supplies to their troops, sometimes these supplies could be seriously interrupted for different reasons, which caused real exhaustion and hardship for their men. As a means of economizing and relieving their troops of some of the hardship, ‘Abbāsīd commanders would sometimes rid themselves of the burden of captives by putting them to death.

Turning to the topic of levies, volunteers, and other supernumerary fighters, we have noted that although the ‘Abbāsīd central forces were oftentimes sufficient to carry out any necessary military tasks within and without the state’s borders, on occasions they might need additional manpower. As a means to repair the shortage of combatants, the ‘Abbāsīds turned to a number of solutions, the first of which was to raise forces by levy, which could be either compulsory in the case of wealthy people

or voluntary when subsidizing men who were willing and capable of bearing arms. The latter were subsidized on a regional rather than a tribal basis. Besides, the levied forces, the ‘Abbāsids also employed purely voluntary troops (*mutaṭawwi‘ah*), most of whom were Arab tribesmen from the regions of Iraq, Jazīrah, and Syria, who joined the army for religious and financial motives. Besides taking part in raids, the military contribution of the *mutaṭawwi‘ah* was most clearly seen in defending the Islamic frontiers, especially those situated north of Jazīrah and Syria. Because they were not as amenable to discipline as the regular troops, the *mutaṭawwi‘ah* were usually kept in separate detachments in battle formation.

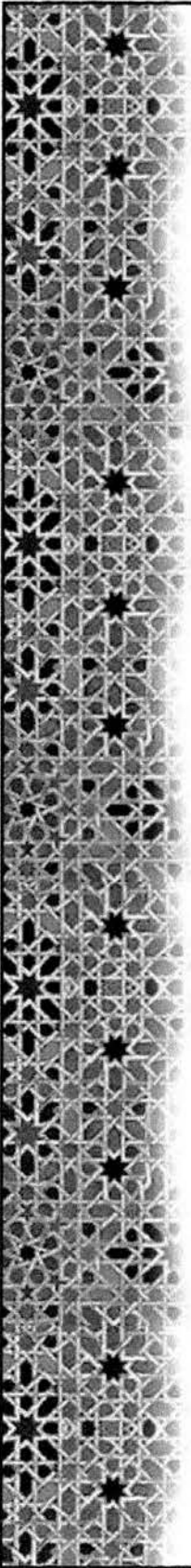
Among other supernumeraries mentioned in early ‘Abbāsīd armies were camp-followers (including slaves, freemen, and fellow tribesmen), locally recruited militias, and even released prisoners.

Turning to the topic of exchanging captives, we have noted that exchanging captives became much more definitely and organized under the ‘Abbāsids than it had been under the Umayyads. The vast majority of persons ransomed during early ‘Abbāsīd times were volunteers and civilians rather than members of the standing army, most probably because captured fighters were executed immediately after the conclusion of battles. Generally, the ransom operations between the ‘Abbāsids and the Byzantines would occur after delicate negotiations between the two sides regarding the number, the age, the gender, and the social status of the captives to be exchanged. Frequently these ransom operations took place across the River Lamos in Western

Cilicia and were carried out in a very organised manner according to rules agreed beforehand between the two parties.

Turning to army command and ranks, we have noted that unlike their predecessors, the early 'Abbāsid Caliphs on many occasions took command of their armies during military campaigns and sometimes they would also place their sons, especially their heirs apparent, at the head of military expeditions. Next to the Caliph in the chain of command came the commanders (*quwwād*), whose racial origins during the first century of 'Abbāsid rule were as diverse as the changing elements that composed the army during that period. Most times, senior appointments in the early 'Abbāsid armies were based on political considerations more than on military qualifications. The actual authority of the early 'Abbāsid commanders over their men during military campaigns was often overshadowed by that of the Caliph, who would interfere personally in appointing the army sub-commanders, the administrators, and the courtiers who would join the campaign. Under the 'Abbāsids, the Muslim armies were no longer organized and commanded on a tribal basis, but rather according to geographical considerations. This continued to be the prevailing method until the large-scale introduction of Central Asian troops, who, owing to their lack of any homeland ties, were organized racially as they were indiscriminately identified as Turks (*Atrāk*). The chain of command in the early 'Abbāsid armies and the number of troops under each rank most probably extended from an '*arj*' over ten men, *naqīb* over ten '*arafā*', *qā'id* over ten *nuqabā*', and an *amīr* over ten *quwwād* of 10,000 men.

Finally, in contrast to the early days of Islam and the Umayyad Caliphate, the military chain of command under the 'Abbāsids was marked by the absence of the rank of the deputy (*khalīfah*) of the commander-in-chief, who would take charge of the army in case the commander-in-chief was killed, wounded, or dismissed. As a consequence, it became a familiar scenario under the early 'Abbāsids that whenever the commander-in-chief was killed on the battlefield, the whole campaign would cease until the Caliph dispatched a new army under a new commander.



Chapter 5

Mobilization and Tactics

Introduction

The word ‘mobilization’ within a military context could perhaps be best translated into Arabic as *ta‘biyah*, which means the art of arranging the troops in the best possible military manner, whether on parade, on the march, in camp, or on the battlefield, to achieve the best intended results. This chapter attempts to trace the overall characteristics of the military mobilization and fighting tactics under the early ‘Abbāsids. For convenience, it is divided into three sections: march and camp, field warfare, and summer and winter raids.

5.1 March and Camp

Before the founding of Sāmarrā’ in 220/ 835, Baghdad was the main base in which the ‘Abbāsīd standing troops were concentrated and from which the ‘Abbāsīd armies launched most of their military campaigns to all parts of the state. The first procedure in organizing military expeditions in the time of the ‘Abbāsīds was for the Caliph to choose the commanders who would lead the expedition. As part of the insignia of command, each commander would be presented (*‘aqada*) with a banner.¹ As a significant part of the mobilization of the army for a military operation, the commander-in-chief would take care to provide his troops with all the necessary war equipment and supplies before the day of dispatch. The time needed to complete this task would vary from one campaign to another according to the number of the participating troops and the destination of the army. In small-scale campaigns, the

preparation might only take a few days before the army could set out on the march directly from Baghdad itself. Nevertheless, in large-scale operations, which were usually led by the Caliph or his heir apparent, the matter might take a long time, perhaps up to two months² and sometimes even more than seven months, as in preparation for the campaign against the Byzantine stronghold city of ‘Ammūriyyah in 223/ 838.³ In these large expeditions, the army’s mobilization ground and its point of departure was most frequently outside the walls of Baghdad. During the early years of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate, this would take place on the site of al-Ruṣāfah or what used to be called ‘Askar al-Mahdī, on the east bank of the Tigris at Baghdad.⁴ However, after the founding of al-Ruṣāfah in 151/768, the ‘Abbāsīds seem to have adopted two new sites north of Baghdad on the east bank of the Tigris to be the bases where the armies would encamp, prepare, and set out from on their way to war. While the Bardān area, about seven parasangs north of Baghdad, was the base in which ‘Abbāsīd armies encamped before their departure on expeditions into the Byzantine lands,⁵ the nearby area of Nahrawān, about four parasangs from Baghdad,

¹ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 441, 581; Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 534; *K. al-‘Uyūn*, pp. 328, 332.

² Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 244; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 148; Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 398.

³ For detailed discussion of the timing of the ‘Ammūriyyah campaign, see Shākir, *Banī al-‘Abbās*, vol. 2, pp. 562-3.

⁴ Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 361; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 37; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 198; Ya‘qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 22.

⁵ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 116, 148, 623; Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 398; Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 379. On the location of Bardān, see Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, vol. 1, pp. 375-6; Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Masālik*, p. 93; Iṣṭakhri, *Masālik*, p. 87.

was the base from which expeditions set out against eastern provinces.⁶ Nevertheless, after the removal of the ‘Abbāsid capital from Baghdad to Sāmarrā’, the area of ‘Uyūn, on the western bank of the Tigris, became the new site in which ‘Abbāsid armies would concentrate before marching out to war.⁷ On many occasions, especially important military expeditions, the ‘Abbāsid Caliphs would seek the advice of astrologers on the best time for the army to depart, although the enthusiasm of the former might sometimes lead them to simply ignore such advice.⁸ Before the commencement of the march, the ‘Abbāsid Caliph or his commander-in-chief would review the troops.⁹ This was probably to check that each unit was present in its correct strength and with its proper complement of weapons and equipment.¹⁰ Finally, the commander-in-chief or the Caliph, if he personally led the expedition, would order the distribution of the pay to the troops as well as hard-cash gifts to the commanders of the army and notable people and, just at this point, the army would be ready to march.¹¹

⁶ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 315, 338, 391, 406. On the location of Nahrawān, see Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, vol. 5, pp. 324-7.

⁷ Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 475; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 56; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 40.

⁸ Suyūṭī, *Tārīkh*, p. 336; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 146, 407, 564; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, vol. 10, p. 303; Ibn al-‘Ibrī, *Mukhtaṣar*, pp. 235-6.

⁹ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 148, 391, 407.

¹⁰ Tantum, “Muslim Warfare”, p. 190.

¹¹ Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 475; Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 379.

Sometimes, however, especially in great military expeditions and as a way to rise the morale of their troops, the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphs along with members of the royal family and the high officials of the ‘Abbāsīd court might escort (*shāya’a*) the army for a distance, perhaps as far as the gate of the capital or sometimes over most of the very long distance to the battle site. On one occasion, Caliph al-Manṣūr is reported to have escorted his army, that was heading from Baghdad to Ifrīqiya (in 154/771), as far as Jerusalem.¹²

Because the march (*maṣār*) was a preparatory stage to actual warfare, to avoid being surprised by the enemy, a mobilization plan (*ta’biyah*) would be drawn up for the army to follow at this stage. The most common plan was to divide the army into five main divisions: the vanguard (*muqaddimah*); the right flank (*maymanah*); the left flank (*maysarah*); the centre (*qalb*), the commanding hub of the whole army; and, finally, the rear (*mu’akhkharah* or *sāqah*), which would contain the baggage (*athqāl*), provisions, siege engines, etc.¹³ On occasions, however, each of these main divisions could be divided during the march into a number of smaller divisions similar in formation to that of the general army, as happened in the attack on ‘Ammūriyyah under al-Mu‘taṣim. In that campaign there was a distance of two

¹² Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 386. For more examples, see Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 147.

¹³ Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 4, p. 60; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 391, 498; vol. 8, pp. 29-30; vol. 9, pp. 58, 60; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 40; Ibn al-Azraq, *Badā’i*, p. 158.

parasangs between the centre and the two flanks, and each of these divisions was itself divided in turn into right and left flanks.¹⁴

During the *masār*, the army would be headed by a scouting party (*ṭalīʿah*). Its duty as confined to exploring the land ahead of the army to find the best route, discover any ambushes laid by the adversary, find out the enemy's position, size, and what kinds of weapons or tactics it might use, and to give the first alarm of battle.¹⁵

To facilitate the march of the army along the road and ensure its arrival at the intended destination on time, the army was also headed by groups of workmen (*fa'lah*), whose function was to repair the roads, cut down trees, build bridges and barrages over rivers, and attend to other necessary activities relating to the route to be taken.¹⁶

Besides using drums as a means of communication between the squadrons of the army during the march, the 'Abbāsids would also use them in the course of the

¹⁴ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 63; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 314.

¹⁵ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 412, 417, 463; vol. 8, pp. 38, 136, 531; Harthamī, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 29.

There were two occasions when 'Abbāsīd commanders did not take care to send a scouting party ahead of their armies. On both occasions the consequences were absolute defeat. Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, p. 399; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 136, 408.

¹⁶ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 590; vol. 8, p. 406; vol. 9, pp. 32, 43; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 29; K. al-'Uyūn, p. 385.

march as a means of keeping order, as regal insignia, and as a psychological weapon, boosting the morale of their men and, hopefully, terrifying the enemy.¹⁷

During the *masār*, should the army come upon a river, mountain slope, or defile, the commander would by all means possible ensure that his army passed safely and in a very organized manner to avoid any surprise attack by the enemy or confusion among the troops. The common procedure in such situations was to avoid all the army passing at once. Instead, a single squadron with all its cavalry and its foot-soldiers would pass through the defile, while the next squadron following behind would not go near the defile until it was clear that all the men in the squadron in front had passed through and the road was clear for it to move forward. The rest of the army would follow the same procedure.¹⁸

When the ‘Abbāsid army had to march through a hostile area over difficult terrain, the commander would instruct his army to advance very slowly and cautiously. During some stages of the war with the Khurramiyyah, the ‘Abbāsid army could only creep along at a rate of four miles a day.¹⁹

The march would end with the choosing of a spot of land for the final encampment (*mu‘askar*). The commander would bear in mind that as far as circumstances

¹⁷ K. al-‘Uyūn, p. 332; Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, p. 261; vol. 4, p. 43; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 407; vol. 9, pp. 25, 32, 34; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, pp. 20, 26, 30.

¹⁸ Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 30; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 36, 38.

¹⁹ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 31, 34.

permitted, the encampment had to be in a terrain rich in natural resources like pasture and water.²⁰ Physical barriers, such as valleys, rivers, and mountains, would also be an important consideration in the selection of the camping ground. The commander would seek to place the encampment with a mountain to the rear to act as a barrier against any enemy attack.²¹ After pitching the camp, the next task would be to build a defensive belt around it. If the encampment was only for a night (*bayāt*) or a couple of days, the commander would be satisfied with simply striking a protective belt of caltrops (*ḥasak*) around the camp.²² So, should the enemy attempt an attack, the sharp points on the caltrops would enter the hooves of the horses and the feet of the infantry, impeding their movement.²³ If the encampment was final or for an anticipated longer period of time, the commander would order the *fa'lah* to dig a trench all around the camp.²⁴ Sometimes, with the availability of rocks, the trench might also be enhanced by the constructing of a wall on its outside.²⁵ To facilitate the movement of forces in and out of the encampment, the trench might have two or four 'gates' (*abwāb*, sing. *bāb*) depending on the size of the camp and the number of

²⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 477; vol. 9, p. 63; Miskawayh, *Tajārib*, p. 489; Harthamī, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 31.

²¹ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 27; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, p. 26; Harthamī, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 31.

²² Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 31; Harthamī, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 32.

²³ Anṣārī, *Tafrīḡ*, p. 60.

²⁴ Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, pp. 25, 28, 29; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 498; vol. 9, pp. 32-3; *K. al-Uyūn*, p. 386; Harthamī, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 32.

²⁵ Dīnawarī, *Akḥbār*, p. 403; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 590; vol., 8, p. 464; vol. 9, p. 23; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 25.

forces.²⁶ On one of its military campaigns, the ‘Abbāsid encampment was as large as one parasang in size.²⁷ Sometimes, because of the nature of the terrain, the army might be divided among several camps. In this case each camp would be entrusted to one of the sub-commanders and each would be protected by its own trench.²⁸

After digging the trench, the next task would be to guard the encampment by day and night. During daylight hours, groups of cavalry forces (*rabāyā*, sing. *rabīʿah*) would be distributed beyond the army camp on hills and the routes that led to the camp. At sunset, the *rabāyā* would be withdrawn and replaced by another raiding patrol known as a *darrājah*. They would be deployed all around the camp in the form of small squadrons (*karādīs*, sing. *kardūs*) with a distance of a mile or a bowshot (*ramyat sahm*) between one squadron and another.²⁹ Controlling high points around the camp as well as sounding the first alarm in case of threat was the duty of groups of unmounted sentries best known as *kūhbāniyyah*³⁰ or *dayādibah*.³¹ In addition, other groups of unmounted guards (*ḥaras* or *‘asākir*) would also be distributed within the encampment as well as outside it just behind the *darrājah*.³² Sometimes,

²⁶ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 336; vol. 8, pp. 29-30.

²⁷ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 406.

²⁸ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 33.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 9, pp. 31, 33; Harthamī, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 32.

³⁰ Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, pp. 29, 30; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 24, 29, 46-7.

³¹ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 52; Harthamī, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 26.

³² Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 31; Harthamī, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 32.

in situations of high alert, the instructions would be so strict to the point that none of the raiding patrol would be allowed to dismount from their steeds during their duty. Moreover, they and the foot-guards behind them were not even permitted to turn and look to another group even if they heard a loud noise. Instead, each group had to devote its absolute attention only to what was near to it.³³ To frighten the enemy from afar and to expose them to the patrol if they drew near the camp, fires would be lit at night on every side of the camp.³⁴

5.2 Field Warfare

While the early days of Islam witnessed a rapid development in the military tactics and formation of Muslim armies, this development seems to have reached a point of settled equilibrium by the end of the first century A.H. Hence, a close look at the military tactics and troop formations employed by the early ‘Abbāsīd forces shows that they did not very much come out of the tactical doctrine that already in use in the time of the Umayyad Caliphate. The main reason for this was probably that the types of enemies and weapons that the ‘Abbāsīds dealt with were almost the same as those the Umayyads had had to deal with before them.³⁵ Nonetheless, the difference between the ‘Abbāsīds’ army and that of their predecessors lay in the prime role and

³³ Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 33.

³⁴ Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 4, p. 45; Harthamī, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 52; Anṣārī, *Tafrīḡ*, p. 61.

³⁵ With the exception of the use of naphtha especially in siege warfare, the military tactics used by the land forces remained without significant change up until the discovery of gunpowder around the sixth century A.H. For information on the use of gunpowder, see Ahmad & Donald, *Islamic Technology*, pp. 109-120; *ET*, s.v. “Bārūd”.

task of the central army within each society and, consequently, the kind of military tactics that were adopted by each side to fit that particular role.

One of the military tactics known and used by Muslims in early 'Abbāsid times was the practice of 'hit and run' (*al-karr wa al-farr*). This fashion of warfare dated from the pre-Islamic period and basically consisted of carrying out a sudden attack against the enemy using the full strength of the army, followed by a quick retreat. This would be repeated until the enemy collapsed or that the attackers lost any hope of victory.³⁶ In connection with this military tactic, Arabs in the pre-Islamic period would sometimes place their camels and goods (called *al-majbūdhah*) behind the army. In addition to its being used as a shelter in the retreat, the *majbūdhah* would also inspire the fighters to fight ferociously knowing that if they lost, their belongings behind them would eventually fall into the hands of the enemy.³⁷

Because of the lack of horses at the beginning and the nature of the conquest operations later, Muslim central forces starting from the time of the Prophet up until the end of the Umayyad Caliphate did not use this kind of fighting tactic. Nonetheless, this method of fighting did not disappear as it continued to be used chiefly by the Arab rebel forces as it very well suited their small numbers in face of the large and heavy forces of the central government. In a battle with the rebel forces

³⁶ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, p. 271; Ibn al-Azraq, *Badā'i*, vol. 1, p. 157.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

in 77/697, the Umayyad army had to endure more than thirty hit and run attacks by the enemy.³⁸

With the accession of the 'Abbāsids to power, the operations of military conquest came to an end. The prime role of the central forces in Baghdad was to deal with and suppress rebel movements and their forces. This led the 'Abbāsids to adopt the hit and run tactic as one of the recognized methods of combat used in mobilizing their troops in battle, especially against stubborn, swift-moving enemies. Khurāsānī commanders of Arab origin such as Khāzim b. Khuzaymah were renowned for their expertise in the hit and run tactic. Khāzim employed this tactic in his war with the rebel forces of al-Mulabbid in 138/756 and again in 141/759 against the Rāwandīyyah.³⁹ Moreover, in a martial comparison between the Khurāsānīs and the Khārijites, Ḥumayd b. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd,⁴⁰ a prominent commander in the time of al-Ma'mūn, stated:

One of the criticisms of the Khārijites concerns their way of disengaging (*mustadbar*) from combat, and of the Khurāsānīs their method of engaging (*mustaqbal*). The weakness of the Khurāsānīs is that as soon as they come up with the enemy they wheel round: if pursued they then take flight, and return again and again to charge. These are reckless tactics, which may encourage the enemy to keep on their heels. When the Khārijites break off

³⁸ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 6, p. 280.

³⁹ Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, pp. 117, 130; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 498, 506.

⁴⁰ A kinsman of Qaḥṭabah b. Shabīb. For further information about him, see Aḥmad, Naṣīf, "Ḥumayd al-Ṭā'ī," In *Majalat al-Majma' al-Ilmī al-'Irāqī* (31: 1980), pp. 221-5; Kennedy, *'Abbāsīd Caliphate*, pp. 159-60.

an engagement; it is broken off for good: once they withdraw they do not return to charge, unless by chance.⁴¹

Another method of combat used by Muslim armies of that time was the tactic of rows or *ṣufūf* (sing. *ṣaff*). The first use of this tactic by Muslims is associated with the first battle fought in Islam, the battle of Badr in 2/624, during which the Prophet, according to the Qur'ānic verse (LXI, 24), introduced the tactic of dividing the army into rows, on that occasion into three rows, one behind the other.⁴² This method of fighting required that the soldiers should conduct their advance (*zaḥf*) in straight unbroken rows as if they were in the prayer position.⁴³ In the battle of Uḥud in 3/625, however, the Prophet modified the tactic by dividing the army's rows in the battlefield into three theoretical sections: the centre, the right flank, and the left flank.⁴⁴ Since then, this formation became the main pivot in the mobilization of the Muslim armies in the battlefields. These three divisions of the combat formation might be near each other or at a distance from one another, as circumstances demanded. Each division would consist of straight rows. The number of rows would differ from one battle to another according to the number of fighters, weapons,

⁴¹ Jāḥiẓ, *Manāqib*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 46. (English translation quoted from Charles, *The Life and Work of Jāḥiẓ*, p. 93).

⁴² Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, vol. 1, pp. 67, 223; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 446.

⁴³ Qur'ān, XV, 8; Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, p. 271.

⁴⁴ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, vol. 3, p. 29; Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, p. 39; Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, vol. 1, p. 219.

and the commander's plan. The number of rows could be two, three, five, or even seven, as happened in some cases.⁴⁵

The manner of organizing the fighters in these rows would also differ from one battle to another depending on the commander's plan, the weapons available, and the enemy's strength. In the defensive position, the first row would almost always consist of infantrymen armed with long spears and shields, followed in the next row by the archers, and behind them the cavalry.⁴⁶ However, if the army was in the assault position, then cavalrymen would be positioned in the first row, followed by archers, and infantrymen in the third row.⁴⁷

In addition to straight rows, Muslims later used other forms of rows. There was the crescent row (*hilālī*), where ranks would be curved out from the wings and in toward the centre, thus strengthening the centre of the rankings and weakening the flanks. To strengthening the flanks, the commander of the army would delegate for each of the flanks a detachment of heavy cavalry as compensation for the bending in toward the centre.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Dīnawarī, *Akhhbār*, p. 173; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 5, p. 12.

⁴⁶ As an example of the adoption this sort of formation, we may cite the battle of Qādisīyah in 14/636. Azdī, *Futūḥ*, p. 221; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 3, p. 559; Dīnawarī, *Akhhbār*, p. 122. The formation was again used in 'Abbāsīd times in the battle of Zāb in 132/750. Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 128.

⁴⁷ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 5, p. 86; Dīnawarī, *Akhhbār*, p. 210.

⁴⁸ This sort of row was used in the battle of Yarmūk in 13/ 635. Ibn al-A'tham, *Futūḥ*, vol. 1, p. 254; Wāqidī, *Futūḥ al-Shām*, vol. 1, p. 175; Harthamī, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 34; Anṣārī, *Tafrīḥ*, p. 76.

There was also the curved or the ‘moustache-shaped’ (*qaṣṣ al-shārib*) row,⁴⁹ where the ranks would be curving out from the centre and in toward the wings, weakening the centre and strengthening the wings. To enhance the centre, the commander would position two cavalry forces in the front near the two flanks of the centre, or put more rows in the centre rather than the flanks.⁵⁰

One of the main advantages of mobilizing the army in the form of unbroken rows (*sufūf*) was that this made the rankings of the army steadier and very hard for the enemy forces to penetrate.⁵¹ On the other hand, the main criticism against it was that if one section of the line was routed, the rest of the line would collapse and consequently the whole formation of the army would fall into disarray.⁵² Because of these practical considerations, the tactic of using unbroken rows was used primarily when the men of the army were totally committed and ready to die before thinking to flee the battlefield under any circumstances.⁵³

At the battle of Yarmūk in 13/635, a fundamental change occurred in Muslim battle array with the introduction of the Byzantine formation of squadrons (*karādīs*, sing.

⁴⁹ Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 4, p. 255.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*; Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, p. 173; Harthamī, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 34.

⁵¹ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, p. 271.

⁵² Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 644; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 173.

kardūs). According to this type of formation, the whole army would be divided into thousands. Thus, each tactical main division would be divided into *karādīs*, each thousand forming a *kardūs* and acting as a separate unit within the main divisions. Each *kardūs*, positioned a bowshot's distance from the next, would consist of groups of lancers, archers, and cavalymen, led by a commander (*amīr kardūs*), himself under the commander of the main division, who, in his turn, would be under the authority of the commander-in-chief.⁵⁴

In contrast to unbroken rows, the squadrons formation was more flexible as, if one squadron was put to flight, it did not have much effect on the whole line, as other squadrons would stand unaffected.⁵⁵ In fact, with this type of formation it was possible for one part of the army to be defeated while another part was victorious.⁵⁶

Both tactics, unbroken rows and squadrons, continued to be used by Muslim forces until 128/746, when Marwān b. Muḥammad, the last Umayyad Caliph, abolished the tactic of unbroken rows and adopted squadrons as the sole recognized formation for

⁵³ To increase commitment in the early days of Islam and during part of the Umayyad era, the Muslim fighters would take their families into battle, where they would place them in the rear (*sāqah*) of the army. Besides encouraging and rising the morale of their men, the families were also used as a strong motive for the men not to flee from the battle, which eventually would lead their families' being captured by the enemy. Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, p. 247.

⁵⁴ Ibn al-Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, vol. 1, p. 166; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 3, pp. 396-7; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 2, p. 259; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 6, p. 8.

⁵⁵ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 644.

⁵⁶ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 3, pp. 400, 538; *ET*², s.v. "Ḥarb".

the central forces in battle.⁵⁷ Marwān's decision, however, did not apply to his opponents, who continued to use both tactics. During their revolt the 'Abbāsīd commanders used both and, in the final decisive battle of Zāb in 132/750, 'Abdallāh b. 'Alī, the 'Abbāsīd commander, is reported to have adopted the unbroken straight-lines formation, while Marwān organized his forces according to squadrons (*karādīs*).⁵⁸

With the accession of the 'Abbāsīds to power and the evaporation of the first enthusiasm of the revolution among their men, the 'Abbāsīds were compelled to abandoned the use of rows, while their enemies did not. In 145/762, when Caliph al-Manṣūr sent 'Īsā b. Mūsā to fight the 'Alid Ibrāhīm b. 'Abdallāh, the latter was advised to meet the enemy with his men arranged in squadron formation rather than in unbroken rows. However, his men refused this formation, proclaiming that the change was an unlawful innovation in Islam and that they should adhere to the same method of fighting as that used by the Prophet.⁵⁹

The actual tactics used in the battlefield would vary from one battle to another according to circumstances. However, among the general rules for mobilizing the army in the battlefield was the principle that each of the main divisions and smaller

⁵⁷ Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 73; Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 4, p. 85; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 349; Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, p. 273.

⁵⁸ Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, p. 260; Azdī, *Tārīkh*, pp. 127-8.

⁵⁹ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 644; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 345; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 100.

units in the army formation enjoyed a degree of independence, though the commander-in-chief might give orders concerning the tactics of one section for the benefit of another, or take from one section reinforcements for another.⁶⁰ Each section of the army would fight the similar section in the opposing army based on locality. Almost always the full burden of the fighting, whether in defence or offence, would rest upon the flanks of the army. Meanwhile, the centre of the army would stand unmoved and its main role was to enhance the flanks by reinforcing any side needing more manpower.⁶¹ Nevertheless, on very rare occasions, when the army found itself in critical straits, the commander might shift the attack from the flanks toward the centre of the enemy's formation. For example, in the battle between the two 'Abbāsid armies, those respectively of al-Ma'mūn and al-Amīn, in Khurāsān in 195/811, their military commanders Ṭāhir and 'Alī b. 'Īsā mobilized their armies in similar fashion but according to different plans. 'Alī, whose troops were too many, arranged his men into a centre and two wings, each of which contained ten squadrons, a thousand men in each. The squadrons in each division were arranged in a successive manner, one after another, putting a bowshot between each. 'Alī instructed the commander of each squadron that when the first squadron had fought, held out, and the battle had become too protracted for it, the next squadron was to be moved forward, while the one that had fought was to be moved back until its men regained their spirit, rested, and had the energy to fight again. Meanwhile, Ṭāhir also mobilized his army into a centre and two wings, each in the

⁶⁰ Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 104; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 478; *K. al-'Uyūn*, p. 218.

form of squadrons. But, because his men were too few, he decided to adopt the Khārijites' battle tactic (*naj' aluhā khārijīyah*), which consisted basically of a single-round fight during which either victory was achieved or a rapid retreat was made if the enemy gained the upper hand. Seeing the two flanks of his army being pressed very hard by the forces of 'Alī, Ṭāhir decided to take the risk and concentrate his attack upon the centre of the enemy's army rather than the flanks, knowing that if the centre collapsed, the whole of the enemy's army would eventually follow. Ṭāhir did so and victory was achieved by the end of the day.⁶²

The fighting would commence with a signal being given by the general commander. This signal could be given by waving the banner (*liwā'*), beating the drums, or exclaiming the *takbīr* ('Allāh is Great).⁶³ On some occasions, before the fighting commenced, the commander-in-chief would choose the highest point near the battlefield to observe the course of the fighting. If the battle continued long on the same ground, an arbour (*'arṣh*) would be erected to protect the commander-in-chief from the heat of the sun. However, if the battle was short or in the form of raids that each time happens in a different place, it would be sufficient to spread for him a leather mat (*naṭ'*) and position a seat (*kursī*) from which he could view each raid.⁶⁴

To deliver his instructions to his commanders in the middle of the fighting, the

⁶¹ Harthamī, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 41; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 415-6, 433-4, 477-8, 645-6.

⁶² Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, p. 399; *K. al-'Uyūn*, p. 324; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 392, 409-11; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, pp. 373-4; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 10, p. 7.

⁶³ Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, p. 261.

commander-in-chief might sometimes employ runners (*rusul*, sing. *rasūl*) who would go back and forth between the two sides.⁶⁵ Sometimes, in the middle of the fighting, the commanders would instruct their men by using brief military call signs (*nidā'āt*, sing. *nidā'*) whose meanings were conventionally known to soldiers of that time. These *nidā'āt* would include 'arms' (*al-silāḥ*), meaning to get ready to fight; 'ground' (*al-arḍ*), meaning to dismount from their horses and fight on foot; and 'attack' (*al-ḥamlah* or *al-naḡīr*), meaning to launch the attack in the battlefield.⁶⁶

Although the 'Abbāsīd standing army would fight for any cause as long as they were paid,⁶⁷ the commander might sometimes need to raise the spirit of his men and excite their zeal to fight bravely, especially when the balance of the fighting in the battlefield was not in his favour. Usually, this would be done by proclaiming a series of enthusiastic slogans, which would include reminding the soldiers of their noble history and their heroes.⁶⁸ The commander-in-chief would send gifts and rewards to his commanders to be distributed among those soldiers who fought valiantly. The

⁶⁴ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 478; vol. 9, pp. 35, 40; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 104; vol. 6, p. 33.

⁶⁵ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 478; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 104; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 67.

⁶⁶ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 433, 499; vol. 8, p. 426; vol. 9, p. 24; *K. al-'Uyūn*, p. 328.

⁶⁷ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 187, 412, 419, 442; Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, p. 418; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 366.

⁶⁸ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 391-2, 434, 477; vol. 8, pp. 411, 414; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, pp. 49, 70, 374.

soldiers who excelled might be given a purse containing money, a golden neck chain (*siwār*), a golden bracelet (*ṭawq*), or an increase in their pay allowance.⁶⁹

During marching, camping, and fighting, the fighters would identify themselves by standing with their leaders (*quwād*, sing. *qā'id*) under their banners (*alwiyah*, sing. *liwā'*) and standards (*rāyāt*, sing. *rāyah*).⁷⁰ The use of these *alwiyah* and *rāyāt* dated from pre-Islamic times, when each tribe and clan had its own identifying *liwā'* and *rāyah*.⁷¹ The same method of organization continued throughout the early days of Islam and the Umayyad Caliphate, as each tribe would fight under its own distinctive banner.⁷²

Under the 'Abbāsids the *liwā'* and the *rāyah* continued to be used, but this time they were arranged according to military contingents and not on a tribal basis.⁷³ One of the differences between the *liwā'* and the *rāyah* was that the former would be larger than the latter. Each commander within the 'Abbāsīd army's main formation would be assigned a *liwā'*, while each unit or regiment under his command would also have

⁶⁹ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 41.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 8, pp. 410, 441.

⁷¹ Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, vol. 3, p. 896; *EL*, s.v. "Alam".

⁷² Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 4, p. 166; Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, vol. 3, p. 1002; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 3, p. 560; Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. 3, p. 220; *idem.*, *Futūḥ*, p. 535.

⁷³ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 441; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 390; *K. al-'Uyūn*, p. 332; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 440.

its own *rāyah* to fight under.⁷⁴ Hence, the number of *alwiyah* and *rāyāt* would vary in number from one battle to another depending on the number of commanders and their soldiers. In the campaign against Bābak, the ‘Abbāsīd army was so big that it had with it twelve large black banners in addition to around five hundred small banners.⁷⁵ While the *alwiyah* of the ‘Abbāsīd army were similar, as they were black in colour and embroidered in gold letters with slogans and phrases,⁷⁶ it appears that the *rāyāt* varied in shape and probably also in colour to facilitate the identification of each unit on the battleground. To distinguish them from the other *alwiyah* and *rāyāt*, the *liwā’* of the commander-in-chief and the *rāyah* of the unit under which he stood were the largest of all those in the army.⁷⁷ In the war with the Umayyad forces, the *liwā’* of the ‘Abbāsīd general commander was so big that it needed to be fastened on a lance 14 cubits high, while his *rāyah* was flown on a lance 13 cubits high.⁷⁸ The vicissitudes of the *liwā’* had a very significant psychological effect on the spirit of the soldiers. Thus, during the march or when camping, should the *liwā’* be seen unfurled, rumples, or caught up on by anything, this would be taken as boding ill and

⁷⁴ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 30-1, 410, 440; vol. 9, p. 66.

⁷⁵ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 34.

⁷⁶ Ibn Ṭayfūr, *Baghdād*, p. 25; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 581-2.

⁷⁷ Usually the *liwā’* and the *rāyah* of the general commander would be called *al-liwā’ al-a‘ẓam* (the great banner) and *al-rāyah al-‘uẓnā* (the great standard). Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, vol. 1, p. 58; vol. 3, p. 996; Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, p. 14.

⁷⁸ Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 28; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 356; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 7, p. 271.

as a sign of pending defeat.⁷⁹ Therefore, every effort was made to maintain the banners and standards in their correct horizontal and vertical positioning. It is reported, for example, that after appointing ‘Abdallāh b. Ṭāhir to lead the army against the rebel forces of Naṣr b. Shabath, Caliph al-Ma’mūn ordered that all the drying lines of the fullers along with the sunshades lying along ‘Abdallāh’s way be removed from the streets of Baghdad so that there should be nothing that would impede ‘Abdallāh’s *liwā’* as he went along.⁸⁰ Likewise, in the war with Bābak, the ‘Abbāsīd commander, al-Afshīn, used mules instead of horses to carry the army’s banners simply to prevent their tottering (*taza‘za’*) during the march.⁸¹

On the battlefield, the fall of the *liwā’* was considered a clear signal of defeat. The *ḥāmil al-liwā’* (banner-bearer) or *ḥāmil al-rāyah* (standard-bearer, or ensign) should therefore be characterized by both courage and patience. In ‘Abbāsīd times, the *mawālī* of the commander seem to have sought out persons of such character as those most often entrusted with this vital and honourable task.⁸²

By the time of the ‘Abbāsīds, battle no longer necessarily commenced with single-handed fighting (*mubārakah*) between the commanders and heroes from each side. But, on rare occasions when this did occur, the fighters from each side had to belong

⁷⁹ Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 49; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 393.

⁸⁰ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 581.

⁸¹ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 32.

to the same kind of fighting division; for example, they must both be either cavalrymen or infantrymen.⁸³ Usually, the first stage of the fighting would start with intermittent bouts of attacks by one or more companies of cavalrymen from each side.⁸⁴ This would be followed by archery attacks from a distance and then the lancers would start to make thrusts at the enemy when they came within close range. The general *mêlée* (*mujāladah*) would start when the armies came very close and would fight using axes, swords, and shields.⁸⁵ On the battleground, pitfalls were sometimes dug, sealed, and covered to act as traps. In the war with the Khurramiyyah, ‘Abbāsid horsemen fell off the backs of their mounts as the forelegs of their horses stumbled in the pitfalls.⁸⁶

During the actual fighting the ‘Abbāsid soldiers wore items of defensive armour, most of which were known to Muslims before this time. The main piece of armour was the coat of mail (*dirʿ*, pl. *durūʿ*), which was constructed of chain mail (*zarad*) tightly twisted together and attached, front and back, to round metal plates to protect the upper part of the fighter’s body.⁸⁷ The *dirʿ* was worn by both the infantry and

⁸² *Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 414; vol. 8, p. 30.

⁸³ Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, vol. 18, p. 251; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 590.

⁸⁴ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 433; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 69.

⁸⁵ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 589.

⁸⁶ Dīnawarī, *Akhhār*, p. 403; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 33; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 43.

⁸⁷ Rehatsek, “Notes”, p. 233.

cavalry as well as common soldiers and commanders.⁸⁸ In association with the *dirʿ*, soldiers might wear a wide belt (*minṭaqah*) made of leather (*adam*) to protect the waist and hold the dagger or the club.⁸⁹ The infantryman who wore a *dirʿ*, i.e. the armour-clad soldier known as a *dārīʿ*, was placed in the front line, while the infantryman without such cladding, the *ḥāsir*, was placed behind.⁹⁰ Offering greater freedom in battle, some fighters might wear a *jawshan*, which was a light *dir* made to protect only the front of the fighter's body. It seems that only skilled soldiers and commanders would use this form of *dirʿ*.⁹¹ To protect the skin from the metal, soldiers would wear an undergarment (*ghilālāh*, or *shalīl*) made of a material such as linen.⁹² One of the common items of the armour at that time was the helmet. The *bayḍah*, *khūdḥah*, and *lāmāh* (all meaning 'helmet') were used to cover the top of the head.⁹³ The *mighfar*⁹⁴, however, was a helmet that covered the head and all of

⁸⁸ Dīnawarī, *Akḥbār*, p. 398.

⁸⁹ Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 4, p. 53; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 186, 194; Jāḥiẓ, *Rasāʾil*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 20; *idem.*, *Bayān*, vol. 3, p. 18.

⁹⁰ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 410.

⁹¹ Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *ʿIqd*, vol. 1, p. 199; Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyūn al-Akḥbār*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 131; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 374; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 465.

⁹² Dīnawarī, *Maʿānī*, vol. 2, p. 1033; Ibn Sīdah, *Mukhaṣṣaṣ*, vol. 6, pt. 2, p. 72.

⁹³ Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, p. 411; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 590; vol. 8, p. 52.

⁹⁴ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 458.

the face except the eyes.⁹⁵ To protect the head from the helmet, a short head-covering (*qalans ūwah*), probably made of fur or fabric, was worn beneath it.⁹⁶

Some fighters might also wear metal vambraces (*sā'idān*, sing. *sā'id*) and greaves (*sāqān*, sing. *sāq*) to add extra bodily protection to the forearms and legs.⁹⁷

The military expedition would come to its final conclusion with an enemy's either achieving victory or succumbing to defeat. In the latter case, the victorious army would return to Baghdad, where it would be warmly received by the Caliph, members of the 'Abbāsid household, nobles of the court, and poets.⁹⁸ Starting from the reign of Caliph al-Mu'taṣim, a novel practice emerged in the customary rewarding of those commanders who distinguished themselves on the battlefield. In addition to the cash reward, the Caliph would present his victorious commanders with a robe of honour (*khal'ah*),⁹⁹ a golden crown (*tāḥ*), double broad belts

⁹⁵ Nūwayrī, *Nihāyah*, vol. 6, p. 240; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 6, p. 618; vol. 7, p. 589.

⁹⁶ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 52; Ahsan, *Social Life*, p. 30.

⁹⁷ Mus'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, p. 411; Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, vol. 3, p. 18; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 291.

⁹⁸ Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 4, pp. 56-8; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 55; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 38; K. al-'Uyūn, p. 388; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 474.

⁹⁹ According to Hilāl al-Ṣābī (*Rusūm*, pp. 93-4), the *khal'ah* consisted of the following articles: "a black turban of one colour (*'imāma muṣmaṭa sawdā'*); a robe (*sawād*) of a single colour having a collar and lining; a similar robe without the collar; red *khazz* silk of Sūs, gold-figured silk (*washī mudhahhab*) and *mulḥam* stuff or single-coloured stuff of *khazz*; *Dabīqī qabā'* and a sword with a red sheath studded with silver; a mount and a saddles" (English translation quoted from Ahsan, *Social Life*, p. 60).

(*wishāḥān*) adorned with jewels, and a garland (*iklīl*) with rubies and emeralds within gold-filigree work.¹⁰⁰

Meanwhile, the sort of punishment imposed on those commanders who failed in their mission would vary according to the degree of the humiliation of their defeat and, most important, the status of the commander within the 'Abbāsid court and the family he belonged too. The punishment could range between scolding, reducing his annual grant, divesting him of the official 'Abbāsid insignia of black, along with confiscating his wealth and imprisonment, and finally threat of death.¹⁰¹

Finally, the ceremony of executing the unlucky rebel leaders who were captured in the battlefield and brought alive to Baghdad also varied according to the degree of the threat they had constituted to the central government. As a form of humiliation, petty leaders of rebellions were usually brought to the streets of Baghdad to be paraded before the public dressed in a coarse woollen coat (*mudar'a'ah ṣūf*) and mounted on camels or mules, with their faces turned to the tail.¹⁰² Meanwhile, to show the great efforts and accomplishment of the army, really threatening rebel

¹⁰⁰ Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 4, p. 56; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 52; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 38; Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, p. 405; *K. al-'Uyūn*, p. 388; Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 426.

¹⁰¹ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 145, 150, 172.

¹⁰² Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, pp. 131, 233; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 509; vol. 8, p. 124; *K. al-'Uyūn*, p. 228.

leaders, such as Bābak,¹⁰³ were presented to the public eyes dressed elegantly in a short coat (*qabā*) of satin brocade and a round cap (*qalansūwah*) of sable fur. Moreover, for a great display, they would also be mounted on a magnificent camel or elephant that had been specially painted and adorned with dyestuff for this occasion.¹⁰⁴ However, the execution of both classes of rebel leaders followed the same process as it would start by cutting of their hands followed by their legs and then their heads, after which their bodies would be crucified in one of the public places in Baghdad.¹⁰⁵

5.3 Summer and Winter Raids (*al-Ṣawāʾif wa al-Shawāʾi*)

Among those issues that the ‘Abbāsids inherited from the Umayyads was the continuation of the idea of carrying out the duty of *jihad* against the Byzantine Empire. Nevertheless, the manner of the ‘Abbāsids’ struggle with the Byzantines was somewhat different in regard to its objective and fighting tactics from that of the Umayyads. While the Umayyads were always ambitious to expand within Asia Minor, to conquer Constantinople, and, if possible, to terminate the Byzantine Empire, the ‘Abbāsid Caliphs followed a purely defensive policy in their dealings

¹⁰³ Bābak is said to have defeated six famous generals in a period of 20 years, to have slain 255,000 persons, and to have taken 3,300 men and 7,600 women as captives. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 54-5; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 39; Ibn al-Ibrī, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 241. With a sense of exaggeration al-Masʿūdī (*Tanbih*, p. 307) estimates the number of Bābak’s forces to have been 200,000.

¹⁰⁴ Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 4, p. 57; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 53; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 312.

¹⁰⁵ Dīnawarī, *Akḥbār*, p. 405; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, pp. 131, 233; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 509; vol. 8, p. 124; vol. 9, p. 53; *K. al-ʿUyūn*, pp. 228, 388; Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 4, p. 57; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 312; Yaʿqūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 474.

with the Byzantines. This is evident in the fact that the ‘Abbāsids’ military policy towards the Byzantines stood on two primary principles. First, they endeavoured to strengthen the boundaries of their state with the Byzantines by constructing a series of fortresses and fortified towns to protect their territories from the Byzantine military raids. Second, they adopted a permanent tactical system in their fight with the Byzantines, consisting of the launching of regular seasonal raids on the important settlement centres located in the frontier regions of the Byzantine Empire. These seasonal raids were of two types: summer raids (*ṣawāʾif*, sing. *ṣāʾifah*) and winter raids (*shawātī*, sing. *shāṭiyah*).¹⁰⁶

Of these two, the summer raids were by far the more common to be conducted by ‘Abbāsīd forces, as we find only two examples of winter raids throughout the first century of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate, the first raid in 178/795 and the second in 231/846.¹⁰⁷ Not only did the harsh climate, which characterizes Asia Minor, make winter raids difficult,¹⁰⁸ but, most important, they were also hampered by difficulties in providing the beasts used by the soldiers with the necessary fodder during the raid. This meant that whenever the Muslims had to launch a raid during the winter, they would have to carry with them enough provisions for themselves and their beasts.¹⁰⁹

With regard to the timing and the length of these two types of raids, Qudāmah points

¹⁰⁶ For a full list of these seasonal raids during the first century of ‘Abbāsīd rule, see Brooks, “Byzantines”, pp. 728-47.

¹⁰⁷ Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Tārīkh*, p. 368; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 260; vol. 9, p. 144; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 304; vol. 6, p. 88.

¹⁰⁸ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 144; Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Tārīkh*, p. 368.

out that the summer raid would usually start from the middle of July and last for 60 days. Meanwhile, the winter raid would be launched only under conditions of the maximum necessity. During such raids Muslims would be cautious not to penetrate deep inside the territory of the enemy and take pains to ensure that their raid would not last more than 20 days, during which the soldiers would carry with them sufficient provisions for themselves and their beasts. With regard to timing, the winter raid would usually take place between the end of February and the first half of March, in consideration of the fact that the Byzantines and their animals would be extremely weak at this time of year.¹¹⁰

During the first century of their rule, the ‘Abbāsids showed sufficient enthusiasm to launch these summer raids every year. Nonetheless, internal disturbances sometimes kept them from engaging in this military practice.¹¹¹

These small-scale raids were launched from the Islamic frontiers via the Taurus Mountains into the Byzantine territories. During the early days of the ‘Abbāsid Caliphate, the Pass of al-Ḥadath (*Darb al-Ḥadath*), located to the north of the

¹⁰⁹ Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, p. 193.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 192-3. Qudāmah also notes another type of raid, called *al-rabīʿiyyah* (spring raids). Without any reference to such military raids during the first century of ‘Abbāsid rule, Qudāmah explains that these raids would start in the middle of May when the horses were strong and well fed on the spring pastures. The raid would last for 30 days, i.e. till the end of June, during which the Muslims’ horses would find sufficient fodder on the pastures of Byzantine territory, which in turn would represent another spring season for the Muslims’ horses. Following the raid, Muslims would take rest with their horses from the middle of June till the middle of July, as the summer raiding would then resume.

frontier town of Mar'ash, was the pass most used by 'Abbāsid forces in their raids.¹¹² Nevertheless, with the development of the Islamic frontier strongholds in the Cilicia region, especially that of Ṭarsūs, the Gates of Cilicia became the pass preferred by the 'Abbāsids in launching their raids.¹¹³ This did not, however, stop the Muslims from using other passes, such as Malaṭyah¹¹⁴ and the Qālīqalā pass in the extreme part of Anatolia.¹¹⁵

Besides the small-scale summer raids, whose operations were mainly confined to the Byzantine frontier region adjacent to that of Muslim lands, there were also large-scale summer raids. For example, the period from 159/776 till the end of the rule of Caliph al-Rashīd in 193/809 witnessed huge summer raids that were able to penetrate the hinterland of Asia Minor. In 159/776, the 'Abbāsid forces led by al- 'Abbās b. Muḥammad managed to launch a summer raid which stormed the Byzantine territory as far inland as Ancyra (modern Ankara).¹¹⁶ In 162/779, al-Ḥasan b. Qaḥṭabah launched a summer raid by which he was able to reach as far as Dorylaion

¹¹¹ For example, the period between 140/758 and 146/764 witnessed a cessation of such raids as Caliph al-Manṣūr was occupied with the affairs of the sons of 'Abdallāh b. al-Ḥasan. The same thing happened between 191/807 and 215/830 because of the civil war and its consequences. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 500; vol. 8, p. 337.

¹¹² Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 500; vol. 8, pp. 57, 150, 324; vol. 9, p. 57.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 623; vol. 9, p. 58; Le Strange, *Lands*, pp. 133-4.

¹¹⁴ Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Tārīkh*, p. 337; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 500.

¹¹⁵ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 143.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 116; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 231.

(*Adhrūliyyah*, modern Eskişehir).¹¹⁷ Again, during the summer raid of 165/782, the ‘Abbāsid forces under the command of Hārūn the son of Caliph al-Mahdī, managed to penetrate deep into Byzantine territory as far as the sea of Marmara in the far west.¹¹⁸

Despite the cessation of the large-scale summer raids after that year, they were resumed in 181/798 when ‘Abd al-Malik b. Ṣāliḥ succeeded in launching a summer raid during which he reached Ancyra.¹¹⁹ In the following year, 182/799, the ‘Abbāsid troops carried out a summer raid which succeeded in reaching Ephesus (*Afşūs*, modern Efes) in the west of Asia Minor.¹²⁰

Although historical sources do not provide sufficient information about the number of soldiers who took part in these summer and winter raids, it seems that the figure did not exceed 10,000 soldiers in a single raid.¹²¹ Nevertheless, this number was liable to great increase if the raid was led by a prominent figure like the Caliph or one of his representatives from among the senior commanders of the army. During the summer raid under the command of al-Ḥasan b. Qaḥṭabah in 162/779, the

¹¹⁷ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 142; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 242.

¹¹⁸ Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 396; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 248; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 152-3.

¹¹⁹ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 286; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 314.

¹²⁰ Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 294; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 269; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 317.

¹²¹ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 323; vol. 9, p. 145.

participants numbered 30,000 regular soldiers, besides volunteers.¹²² In the summer expedition of 165/782, the ‘Abbāsīd forces, under the command of al-Rashīd, numbered more than 95,000 men.¹²³ In 191/807, Harthamah b. A‘yan led the summer raid with 30,000 men from among the Khurāsānī troops.¹²⁴

As to the objectives of these summer and winter raids, it is evident that they were not intended to expand the territory of the Islamic State at the expense of the Byzantine front, which very much remained without any significant change since the ‘Abbāsīds had inherited the Islamic State from the Umayyads.¹²⁵

It seems, though, that these raids successfully accomplished other objectives. The most important of these was their defensive effect, as they helped to protect the Islamic territories by destroying the Byzantine frontier bases and consequently establishing a neutral land (no man’s land) that would separate the Byzantine lands from those of the Muslims.¹²⁶ Moreover, the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphs sought by launching these seasonal attacks to enhance their political prestige in the eyes of their subjects. One of the means of doing this was to affirm the religious character of the ‘Abbāsīd

¹²² Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 152. Meanwhile, with exaggeration Ibn al-Athīr (*Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 242) gives the number as 80,000 regular troops, besides volunteers.

¹²³ Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 248; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 152.

¹²⁴ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 323; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 348.

¹²⁵ It is obvious that the ‘Abbāsīds did not try to establish any bases beyond the Taurus Mountains in Asia Minor. Even though fortress towns such as Heraclea, Lulu’ah, and ‘Ammūriyyah would fall into the hands of the ‘Abbāsīds, they did not seek to settle and permanently establish a foothold there. Instead, the only thing they would do was to raze them before their retreat homewards. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 320-2, 628; vol. 9, pp. 65-70.

Caliphate and to assert that its Caliphs would be committed, like the earlier Muslim rulers, to pursuing the *jihād* against the Byzantines, the traditional enemy of the Muslims. Because of the importance attached to these campaigns, we find that historians, such as al-Ṭabarī, list the names of the leaders who carried out these summer raids side by side with the names of the leaders of the pilgrimage campaigns.¹²⁷

Finally, in addition to the fact that the summer and winter raids did not cost the central government's Treasury very much, they represented a good opportunity for the soldiers to gain military experience and to win some plunder. Moreover, these raids also presented a good opportunity for the central government to keep the soldiers busy and so restrain them from committing any disturbances or indulging in acts of violence if they had nothing else to do.

Summary

In this chapter we have discussed in turn the mobilization and tactics employed by the early 'Abbāsīd armies in marching, camping, field fighting, as well as in summer and winter raiding. The main findings of this chapter may be outlined as follows.

The first step in the preparation for a military campaign in the time of the 'Abbāsīds was for the Caliph to select the commanders who would lead the troops and, as part

¹²⁶ Shākir, *Banī al-'Abbās*, vol. 2, p. 300.

¹²⁷ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 460; vol. 8, pp. 27-8, 41, 44, 50, 53, 153, 165, 234-6, 313, 322, 624.

of the insignia of command, each commander would be presented with a banner. One of the main responsibilities of the commander-in-chief before setting out to war was to make the necessary arrangements in providing his army with all the fighting equipment and supplies that would be needed. The time required to accomplish this would vary from one campaign to another depending on the number of troops and the destination of the army.

The site of the assembly ground where the 'Abbāsid army would encamp and prepare, and from which it would set out to war changed during the first century of the 'Abbāsid rule as a consequence of the development of the 'Abbāsids' capitals. After the founding of al-Ruṣāfah in 151/768, the 'Abbāsids adopted two new assembly grounds- al-Bardān and Nahrawān- both on the east bank of the Tigris near Baghdad. Nevertheless, with the shift of the capital to Sāmarrā', the area of 'Uyūn, on the west bank of the Tigris, became the new assembly site for the 'Abbāsid armies before setting out to war.

As a means of raising the morale of their troops heading out to war, the 'Abbāsid Caliphs would usually escort (*shāya'a*) the army some distance on the first leg of its journey.

The most common military formation of the army on the march was for it to be divided into five main divisions, each of which could sometimes in turn be divided into a number of smaller divisions similar in formation to that of the general army.

During the march (*masīr*) the army would be headed by a scouting party (*ṭalīʿah*), part of whose duty was to explore the land ahead of the army and give the first alarm of battle. The army would also be headed by groups of workmen (*faʿlah*), who facilitated the march of the army by carrying out any necessary road repairs ahead of its progress. When faced in a hostile area by a river, mountain slope, defile, or other natural obstacles, ʿAbbāsīd commanders took extreme caution to ensure the safe passage of the army by allowing only a single squadron to pass through the natural barrier entirely and safely before the next squadron could follow.

The site of the army's camp was usually chosen with a view to sustenance and defence, thus taking into account, on the one hand, the availability of water resources and pasture lands, and, on the other hand, natural barriers such as rivers and mountains. As additional defence measures, man-made defences, such as belts of caltrops, trenches, and walls, might also be put in place depending on the length of time to be spent in the camp. Guards would also be stationed around the army camp by day and night and sometimes, in situations of high alert, strict measures were taken to ensure the guard was effective at all times.

In the realm of field warfare, fighting methods employed by the early ʿAbbāsīd armies were the same as those known to Muslims before that time. Among these tactics were 'hit and run', the 'row' (*ṣaff*), and the old Byzantine formation of 'squadrons' (*karādīs*).

Fighting usually commenced on a signal from the commander given by waving a banner, beating the drums, or exclaiming the *takbīr*. Thereafter, the commander would take up a position from which to view the battle and issue further commands.

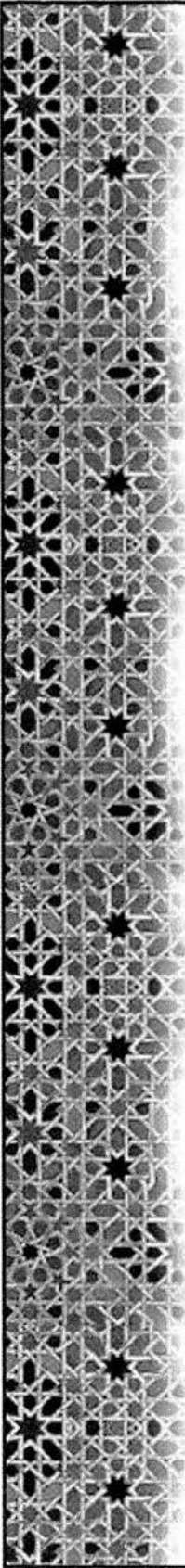
During marching, camping, and fighting, the fighters would identify themselves by standing with their leaders under their banners (*alwiyah*) and standards (*rāyāt*). In contrast to the early days of Islam and the Umayyad Caliphate, the banners and standards in ‘Abbāsīd armies were arranged according to military contingents and not on a tribal basis.

With the ‘Abbāsīds, battle no longer commenced with single-handed combat between heroes from each side, but most often with intermittent bouts of attacks by one or more companies of cavalrymen from each side. This would be followed by archery attacks from a distance and then the lancers would start to make thrusts at the enemy when they came within close range. The armour of the ‘Abbāsīd soldiers included the coat of mail (*dir’*) or lighter *jawshan*, the wide belt to protect the waist and hold weapons, the helmet, vambraces, and greaves.

While the Caliph would bestow rich rewards on his victorious commanders, commanders who failed in their missions were punished according to the degree of military humiliation suffered. Unlucky rebel leaders suffered worse humiliation and public execution.

In pursuing the *jihad* against the Byzantine Empire, the ‘Abbāsīds not only sought to defend Muslim territory by constructing fortified positions along the northern

frontiers of their state, but also engaged in regular summer raids into Byzantine territory and also, on occasions, winter raids. The purpose of these seasonal raids, the extent of which ranged from border skirmishes to raids deep within Byzantine territory, was not to expand Muslim territory. Instead, they aimed to protect Muslim lands, to enhance the Caliph's prestige in the eyes of his subjects, and to keep the soldiers busy and so restrain them from committing any disturbances or indulging in acts of violence if they had nothing else to do.



Chapter 6

'Abbāsīd Sea Warfare

Introduction

This chapter provides details about Muslim sea warfare under the early 'Abbāsids. It is divided into two parts. The first, which in turn is divided into two sections, deals with the 'Abbāsids' naval power, first, in the Mediterranean and, second, in the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, reviewing the procedures that early 'Abbāsīd Caliphs adopted to encounter the naval challenges of their enemies in these two maritime regions. The second part provides a description of the 'Abbāsids' naval organization. For convenience, this part is divided into three sections, dealing respectively with dockyard and naval bases, warships and naval tactics, and, finally, the crew of the warship and the responsibilities of the commander of the fleet.

6.1 'Abbāsīd Naval Power

6.1.1 'Abbāsīd Naval Power in the Mediterranean

The period of the Umayyad Caliphate had been an era during which the Muslims had mastered the art of maritime warfare and learnt how to navigate the seas. It was under Mu'āwiyah, first as governor of Syria and then as Caliph, that the Muslims captured some of the most important islands of the eastern Mediterranean, including Cyprus in 28/648, Aradus (Arwād) in 54/674, and Rhodes in 58/678.¹ Also during the Umayyad Caliphate, Muslim fleets had frequently raided Sicily, Crete, and the

¹Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 4, p. 260; vol. 5, p. 293; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 180, 279; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 2, p. 489; vol. 3, p. 344.

Straits of Bosphorus (*Maḍīq al-Quṣṭanṭīniyyah*).² This supremacy in the Mediterranean ended, however, with the coming of the 'Abbāsids to power.

Unlike the Umayyads, the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs looked to the sea, particularly all along the Mediterranean seacoast, as the border at which they should stand to protect their territories and not as an expanse into which the Muslim state could penetrate and Muslim international commerce could extend. Evidences of the reduction of Muslim naval power in the Mediterranean in early 'Abbāsīd times are numerous. The first clear indication was the spread of fortified coastal towns not only in Syria but also all along the Ifrīqiya seaboard as a means of defending Muslim territory against the persisting Byzantine naval attacks.³ Furthermore, the serious threat that the Byzantine fleet constituted toward the Islamic shores reached such a pitch that Caliph al-Rashīd abandoned the idea of connecting the Red Sea with the Mediterranean by means of a canal. As Ja'far b. Yaḥyā al-Barmakī pointed out, such a canal would only facilitate the access of the Byzantine fleet to that part of the Red Sea coast adjacent to the Ḥijāz and thus the inhabitants of the holy places of Makkah and Madīnah would become vulnerable to attack.⁴ This story reflects the historic fact that while the 'Abbāsīd naval power was waning, the Byzantines' power at sea was increasing to such strength that they were able to impose their full domination

²Ibn Khayyāt, *Tārīkh*, pp.123, 226; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 4, pp. 293, 304; vol. 6, p. 530; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 195; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 279; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 3, p. 344; vol. 4, p. 304.

³Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 300; Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh*, vol. 4, p. 417; Muḥammad "Nash'at al-Arbiṭah", p. 41; Sālim, *al-Baḥriyyah al-Islāmiyyah*, p. 40.

⁴Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. p. 264; Suyūṭī, *Tārīkh al-Khulafā'*, p. 286.

over all the Mediterranean basin. Islamic sources note, for example, that the Byzantine fleet based in Sicily and Sardinia used to sail along the coast of Tunisia waiting to plunder Muslim trading vessels.⁵

It should, however, be noted that despite the 'Abbāsids' general disinterest toward the Mediterranean and the further development of Muslim naval power, this did not mean that there was no 'Abbāsīd fleet based in Syria and Egypt, neither did it mean that there were no serious naval confrontations between these 'Abbāsīd fleets and those of the Byzantines. Yet, the most noticeable thing about these 'Abbāsīd naval operations is that their standard and the victories they achieved did not rank as high as those achieved by the land forces. Furthermore, most of these naval operations were actually imposed on the 'Abbāsids and were the result of necessity rather than their own initiative. In 136/754, the first 'Abbāsīd Caliph, Abū al-'Abbās, had no means other than a military solution to regain power over the Maghrib, which had announced its separation under the leadership of 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ḥabīb al-Fahrī, who had gained power over most of that region between 127/745 and 131/749.⁶ The military expedition was supposed to be of terrestrial and naval components. The leadership of the terrestrial army was given to Abū 'Awn 'Abd al-Malik b. Yazīd and 'Āmir b. Ismā'īl, whereas the naval one was handed to al-Muthannā b. Ziyād al-Khath'amī. The latter reached Alexandria in the month of Shawwāl in 136/754 to

⁵Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 97.

⁶He was finally killed in 138/756. Ibn Khayyāt, *Tārīkh*, p. 328.

prepare to sail towards Ṭarābulus al-Gharb, but at the last moment the plan was cancelled because of the sudden death of Abū al-'Abbās.⁷

The second Caliph, al-Manṣūr, who internally, had to face many serious political, economic, and administrative challenges during the early years of his rule, did not show any enthusiasm for completing the above-mentioned plan. Nevertheless, he did exert some effort to fortify the Syrian coast, which was vulnerable to the raids of Byzantine fleets. In 140/758, the Byzantine fleet based in Cyprus managed to launch an attack on the Syrian shores, destroying and burning the towns of Lādhiqiyah and Ṭarābulus al-Shām.⁸ Although details of this raid are not covered by the historical sources, it seems that this incident was the reason for Caliph al-Manṣūr's undertaking a tour of Syria and Jerusalem to take a close look at the fortification situation of the Syrian coastal cities. During this tour he took some measures to enhance and protect the coastal cities. The first of these was the decision to depose Yūnus b. al-Layth al-'Absī from his post as admiral of the Syrian coastal region (*Amīr Baḥr al-Shām*) and to appoint al-'Abbās b. Sufyān al-Khath'amī in his place.⁹ Al-Manṣūr is also reported to have transferred some groups of Banū Tanūkh from their homelands in northern Syria to Lebanon. The aim of this was to use them to protect the coastal highway, which for some time had been subject to disturbance and

⁷Kindī, *Wulāt*, pp. 123-4; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, vol. 1, p. 331.

⁸Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh*, vol. 34, pp. 402-3.

⁹*Ibid.*, vol. 48, p. 85.

attacks by rebels from among the Nabataeans¹⁰ of Mount Lebanon, as well as against the Byzantines coming by sea.¹¹ In his journey from Jerusalem to al-Raqqah in al-Jazīrah, al-Manṣūr is also said to have inspected the Syrian coastal towns and fortresses, where he gave orders for fortification and of any necessary restoration works to be carried out in these places.¹² The same fortification policy also included the frontier cities, so that, for example, al-Manṣūr ordered the building of the town of al-Maṣṣīṣah in 140/758.¹³

The defensive system maintained on the eastern coastline of the Islamic State during the early period of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate continued to apply the same practices used by the Umayyads. This meant that servicemen (*ajnād*) from inland towns and regions would come and station themselves in the coastal towns during the summertime and in the winter would return to their inland areas, leaving behind a small number of garrisoned troops (*murābiṭūn*).¹⁴ The adoption and continual use of this form of defensive system made the Islamic coastland vulnerable to the sudden attacks of the Byzantine fleets. The petition presented to Caliph al-Manṣūr by the

¹⁰“Nabaṭī (originally referring to the Aramaic-speaking indigenous populations of Syria and Iraq) was a term of opprobrium in early Islam.” Bosworth, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 32, p. 100, n. 318.

¹¹Shidyaq, *Kitāb al-Akḥbār*, vol. 1, p. 217; vol. 2, pp. 495-6; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 192; Hitti, *History of Syria*, p. 545.

¹²Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 193.

¹³Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 509; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 500; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 195. Al-Maṣṣīṣah is situated on the west bank of the Jayḥān, about 20 km. north of the Mediterranean coast. Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, vol. 5, pp. 144-5; *El*², s.v. “Maṣṣīṣa”.

¹⁴Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 196-7.

great Imām al-Awzā'ī (d.159/775),¹⁵ who is reported to have been among those enlisted in the *Dīwān* of the Syrian coast and who devoted himself to *ghazw* and *ribāṭ* there, explains the critical circumstances of these Syrian coastal towns. In his petition, al-Awzā'ī first stresses the vital role that these *murābiṭūn* played in these coastal areas and the harsh conditions under which they performed their guard duties whether in the heat of summer or the long, chilly nights of the winter. By contrast, their colleagues living in the inland towns enjoyed a more comfortable and peaceful life. In his petition al-Awzā'ī further stressed the need for the Caliph to raise the annual salary of these *murābiṭūn* from ten *dinars* to 15, so that they could cope with the high cost of living. The petition also contained a request to the Caliph to speed up the payment of their overdue salaries, since the year had ended without their receiving anything. According to al-Awzā'ī, the delay of their salaries had a very deep impact in causing the deterioration of their living standard as well as that their families.¹⁶

Whether these demands were fulfilled or not is still unclear. However, it seems that the letter had a pronounced impact on the policy of al-Manṣūr, especially towards the seacoast areas. As mentioned earlier, he commenced a tribal rehabilitation programme in Syria, following in this the example of Mu'āwiyah, who had

¹⁵He is 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Umar al-Awzā'ī, one of the renowned religious scholars in Syria of that time. Among the books he composed were: *Kitāb al-Sunan fī al-Fiqh* and *Kitāb al-Masā'il fī al-Fiqh*. Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 318; Basawī, *al-Ma'rifah*, vol. 2, p. 408.

¹⁶This important letter seems only to be found in Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Jarḥ*, vol. 1, pp. 193-5.

transplanted Persian colonists from Ba‘labakk, Ḥimṣ, and Anṭākiya to the Syrian seacoast towns, of Ṣūr and ‘Akkā a century before.¹⁷

The years 142-164/760-764 witnessed disturbances in the Syrian coastland and particularly the part neighbouring Lebanon. This was the result of a widespread rebellion led by the Nabaṭ and other groups inhabiting Mount Lebanon against the ‘Abbāsid authority and its harsh taxation policy in the region.¹⁸ During this period, the rebels, led by a youthful mountaineer called Bandār, an inhabitant of the town of al-Munayṭirah, were able to impose their control over a wide sector in Mount Lebanon and to seriously threaten the stability of the coastal areas. It was not long, however, before Ṣāliḥ b. ‘Alī, the ‘Abbāsid governor of Syria and Egypt, was able to suppress the rebel forces and, having achieved this, he decided to drive out the Nabataeans from their villages in the mountains and to disperse them all over the Levantine lands.¹⁹

Following their success in suppressing the rebel movement in Lebanon, the ‘Abbāsids had to turn toward the people of Cyprus, who supported the Byzantines in their naval raids against the Syrian coastal towns of Lādhīqiyah and Ṭarābulus in 140/758. This seems to have been the reason why the Syrian fleet, under the command of al-‘Abbās b. Sufyān al-Khath‘amī, launched a raid against the island of

¹⁷Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 140; Ya‘qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 88.

¹⁸Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh*, vol. 18, p. 267; Manbajī, *al-‘Unwān al-Mukallal*, vol. 2, pp. 377-8; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 192; Hitti, *Lebanon*, p. 268.

¹⁹Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh*, vol. 18, pp. 267-8; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 193.

Cyprus in 146/763. According to the Syrian historian Ibn 'Asākir, this was the first Muslim naval expedition against the island since the establishment of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate.²⁰

The raid on Cyprus was followed by a decade of silence, during which the Islamic sources do not mention any activities by the 'Abbāsid naval forces in the Mediterranean until 175/773. In that year, the Syrian fleet is reported to have launched an attack on the southern coast of Asia Minor. This attack seems to have been part of a combined land and maritime military operation against the Byzantines during the last days of Caliph al-Manṣūr. The military operation was under the leadership of Thumāmah b. al-Walīd al-'Absī,²¹ who at first attempted to penetrate deeply northwards into the Byzantine Cappadocia region. But it was not long before the Byzantines' land forces, supported by their navy, were able to cut off the line of retreat of Thumāmah's army by capturing the town of Syce and consequently circumscribing Thumāmah's army and depriving it of any contact with the Syrian fleet. Although Thumāmah's army managed to escape the circumscription, the terrestrial campaign ended in failure. Nevertheless, the Byzantine sources record the news of the victory of the 'Abbāsid Syrian fleet in its raid against Cyprus and the capture of its Byzantine ruler.²²

²⁰Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh*, vol. 34, p. 340.

²¹He is known in the Byzantine sources as Thumāmah b. al-Waqqāṣ or θανάκας. Brooks, "Byzantines and Arabs", pp. 734-5.

²²Archibald, *Naval Power*, p. 100; Brooks, "Relation", p. 384; *idem.*, "Byzantines and Arabs", p. 735.

The struggle between Caliph al-Manṣūr and Constantine V, the Byzantine Emperor, ended with the decease of both leaders in the same year. However, the war between the Caliphate and the Empire was not over. During the reign of Caliph al-Mahdī (158–169/775–786), Muslims resumed their naval raids via the Syrian naval bases. According to Islamic sources, there were two consecutive naval expeditions in 160/778 and 161/779, both under the command of the Syrian Admiral, al-Ghumar b. 'Abbās al-Khath'amī. Unfortunately, the sources do not provide any clue of either the direction or the outcome of these two operations.²³

The naval confrontation between the Byzantines and the 'Abbāsids intensified in the time of Caliph al-Rashīd. According to al-Balādhurī, al-Rashīd showed considerable concern for naval affairs as well as for the fortification of Islamic coastal towns.²⁴ It seems though that the initiative in naval attacks in the time of al-Rashīd was not taken by the 'Abbāsids but rather by the Byzantines, whose strategy at the time consisted of closely monitoring the Islamic coasts and carrying out sudden attacks on them. In 174/790, the Byzantine fleet succeeded in capturing some 'Abbāsīd ships sailing from Egypt to Syria.²⁵ This incident was an incentive for the 'Abbāsīd fleet based in Syria to launch in the same year raids against both Crete and Cyprus. These raids were apparently the reason prompting the Byzantine Empress, Irene I, to send a

²³Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 129, 140.

²⁴Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 193.

²⁵Brooks, "Relation", p. 385.

large salvation fleet to Cyprus, yet this fleet was defeated in a sea battle with the Muslims in the bay of Attalia, in which also its admiral was captured.²⁶

The Muslims had to maintain a keen watch on Cyprus and its people, whose incessant alliance with the Byzantines constituted a persistent hazard for the security of the Levantine coastlands. It was because of this that, after the last raid against the island, 'Abd al-Malik b. Ṣāliḥ, the governor of the frontiers (*al-thughūr*), considered revoking the old agreement concluded between the Muslims and the people of Cyprus in the time of the Umayyad Caliph Mu'āwiyah.²⁷ He also considered the option of evacuating the island of its Christian Cypriots and transplanting there a Muslim population instead. However, before proceeding with his plan, 'Abd al-Malik wanted the backing of a juristic ruling (*fatwā*) to uphold the rightness of his measures under the excuse that the Cypriots never fulfilled their pledges toward Muslims. Among the Muslim jurists consulted on this issue were Ismā'īl b. 'Ayyāsh, al-Layth b. Sa'd, Malik b. Anas, and Sufyān b. 'Uyaynah, but out of all those jurists and more, not one of them approved the proposed measures of 'Abd al-Malik and the idea of breaking off the agreement between the two sides.²⁸ Despite this restraint of the Muslims towards the people of Cyprus, the latter continued their collusion with

²⁶ Archibald, *Naval Power*, p. 102.

²⁷ Since the days of Mu'āwiyah, the people of Cyprus used to pay tributes to both the Muslims and the Byzantines. In the time of Caliph 'Abd al-Malik, the Umayyad authority decided to raise the tribute of Cyprus by 1,000 *dinars* above what originally was demanded. This increase was, however, eliminated by the Umayyad Caliph, 'Umar. Nevertheless, Caliph Hishām reimposed the 1,000 *dinars* increase, which continued to be paid by the people of Cyprus until 146/763, when Caliph al-Manṣūr finally abolished the increase and decided to deal with the Cypriots according to Mu'āwiyah's agreement by which the people of the island would pay only 7,200 *dinars*. Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 183.

²⁸ Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 183-6; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, p. 360; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 4, p. 262.

the Byzantines, who used the island as a base for their raids against the Syrian coast. During his great campaign against the Byzantines in 190/806, Caliph al-Rashīd became aware of the seriousness of this co-operation. According to al-Ṭabarī, the Caliph responded by giving charge of the Levantine coastlands as far as Egypt in the south to Ḥumayd b. Ma'yāf al-Hamadānī.²⁹ Thus, while al-Rashīd's land army was advancing into the Byzantine lands as far as Heraclea, Ḥumayd was conducting a naval raid on Cyprus, where he razed buildings and enslaved 16,000 of its people, whom he dispatched to Rāfiqah. There, the judge Abū al-Bakhtārī is reported to have taken charge of selling the captives and it is stated that the bishop of Cyprus was sold for 2,000 *dinars*.³⁰

From Cyprus Ḥumayd continued his naval expedition by attacking Crete and conquering some parts of it.³¹ Meanwhile, land forces under the command of Caliph al-Rashīd were able to take over Heraclea and to force the Byzantine Emperor, Nicephorus, to pay tribute (*jizyah*).³² In 191/807, the Syrian fleet also launched a raid against the Byzantine territories in the Mediterranean, this time against Rhodes,

²⁹Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 320; see also Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 342.

³⁰Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 320, 322; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 43; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 153; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 342. According to al-Balādhurī (*Futūḥ*, p. 183), Caliph al-Rashīd ordered the return of the captives in 191/807.

³¹Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 279.

³²Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 279.

from where, as Islamic sources record, the Muslim fleet returned safely laden with booty and captives.³³

A long period elapsed after this expedition without any naval actions being recorded of the 'Abbāsids, but the time of Caliph al-Ma'mūn witnessed the first meaningful victory of the Muslims over the Byzantines since the establishment of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate. Two of the three major Byzantine islands in the Mediterranean, namely Crete and Sicily, became the property of the Muslims. The winning of these islands, however, was neither through the effort of the central government in Baghdad nor through that of its fleets. Instead, it was by the efforts of independent African and Spanish (Andalusian) Muslim forces who were working outside the realm of the 'Abbāsid authority and policies in Baghdad. It is worth noting, however, that if the loss to the Byzantines of these islands meant the end of their supremacy in the Mediterranean basin, which had lasted undeniably for three quarters of a century following their naval victory over the Umayyads in Cyprus in 129/747, the 'Abbāsid Caliphs in Baghdad were clearly not the beneficiaries of this victory. Instead, it was the new dynasties in north Africa such as the Ṭūlūnids in Egypt, the Aghlabids in Tunisia, and the Idrīsids in Maghrib who were the sole beneficiaries.

³³Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 278; Archibald, *Naval Power*, p. 104.

6.1.2 'Abbāsīd Naval Power in the Persian Gulf (Baḥr al-Baṣrah) and the Indian Ocean

Information regarding 'Abbāsīd naval activities and the trading traffic throughout the Persian Gulf as far as India, East Africa, and China during the early 'Abbāsīd Caliphate is in general scarce. Nevertheless, the small fragments of information that some historic sources do contain, especially those found in the *History of Khalīfah b. al-Khayyāṭ al-Baṣrī* (d. 240/855) are of vital importance. The first fact that these fragmentary reports reveal is the general weakness of the 'Abbāsīd fleet in the Persian Gulf (*Baḥr al-Baṣrah*) during the early years of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate. Most of the time it stood unable to repel the audacious piratic raids which were not confined to attacking trading ships but also put in jeopardy major cities such as Baṣrah and Jeddah on the Red Sea coast. Such events were of noticeable recurrence, especially between the years 141/759 and 153/770, during the reign of al-Manṣūr. Piracy in the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean at that time was closely connected to a people known as the "Mayd".

According to Islamic historical and geographical sources, the Mayd people were from the region of Sind and their concentration was on the town of Sarrast.³⁴ The first indication of piratic activities in the Persian Gulf during the 'Abbāsīd era comes from as early as 141/759. Ibn Khayyāt reports that in that year Caliph al-Manṣūr appointed Muḥammad b. Abī 'Uyaynah b. al-Muhallab as head of the admiralty (*Imārat al-Baḥr*) in the Persian Gulf. So, the latter chose the island of Qays³⁵ as his headquarters. It was not long, however, before his forces engaged with the Mayd in a naval battle, which resulted in the death of his son and compulsion to evacuate the island, which was then taken and laid waste by the Mayd.³⁶ It seems that the absence of any genuinely effective 'Abbāsīd naval forces at that time soon encouraged the Mayd to carry their piratic raids even as far as the mouth of the Tigris. It is reported

³⁴Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 539, 544-5; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, p. 320; Iṣṭakhrī, *Masālik*, p. 176; Ibn Khayyāt, *Tārīkh*, p. 395. Al-Mas'ūdī (*al-Tanbīh*, p. 49 and *Murūj*, vol. 2, p. 20) says about the Mayd: "Near the river of Mahrān [in Sind] is a race of people [*jins*] known as the Mayd. Their numbers are abundant and they are at enmity with the people of Manṣūrah [the military and administrative capital of the Muslims in Sind]. They have warships (*bawārij*) that they use to make piratic attacks on the Muslims' ships sailing to the lands of India, China, Jeddah, and elsewhere. Their ships resemble the galleys (*shawānī*) used in the Mediterranean." In another place al-Mas'ūdī (*Murūj*, vol. 1, p. 168) describes the Mayd as "a people of different races from amongst the people of Sind and elsewhere. Their homeland is the area of Multān, located eight miles from al-Manṣūrah." Ibn Khurradādhbih (*Masālik*, p. 62) simply describes the Mayd as "robbers" (*lūṣūṣ*). Al-Iṣṭakhrī (*Masālik*, p. 176) calls the Mayd "Ahl al-Badh" and states that their homeland in Sind is the area located on the banks of the River Mahrān, between the Multān area and the sea. In addition to the Mayd, piratic activity in the Persian Gulf and as far as the Indian Ocean as well as the Red Sea was closely associated with another group from Sind known as the Kurk. Ibn Khurradādhbih (*Masālik*, p. 65) indicates that they were from the Sind region. Yāqūt (*Mu'jam*, vol. 5, p. 227) comments that they belonged to the Multān area in Sind. Like the Mayd, the Kurk also engaged in piracy, as we shall see later.

³⁵The island of Qays, or Kaysh, is most probably the island referred to as Qaytham in our days. It is located at the mouth of the Persian Gulf. For further information on the island of Qays, see Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Masālik*, p. 62; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 1, p. 344; vol. 5, p. 239.

³⁶Ibn Khayyāt, *Tārīkh*, pp. 388-9.

that in 148/765 the Mayd managed to enter the Shaṭṭ al-‘Arab (*Dijlat al-Baṣrah*).³⁷ A similar attack occurred in 149/766, but sources do not provide any further details about it. Nevertheless, Ibn Khayyāṭ alone records a very important account about the events of that year. Most likely, the account was relevant to Caliph al-Manṣūr and an inspection cruise that he made in the Persian Gulf. It says that the Mayd encountered Abū Ja‘far on the island of Khārak,³⁸ where he and the crew of his boat were injured.³⁹ Assuming that the text had been understood properly and that it relates to Caliph Abū Ja‘far, it reflects the evident feebleness of the ‘Abbāsids’ fleet operating in the Persian Gulf as well as the notorious character of the piratic operations that the Mayd pursued there.

The Mayd continued their attacks on the southern part of Iraq. In 151/768, their ships were again able to sneak into the Shaṭṭ al-‘Arab, but this time it seems that they failed to take the inhabitants by surprise. Instead, the Mayd faced vigorous resistance from inhabitants of southern Iraq under the leadership of Abū ‘Ubaydallāh al-Sa‘dī.⁴⁰ A year later, in 151/769, the Mayd raided Baṣrah again, but to avoid any confrontation with the ‘Abbāsīd forces or the armed inhabitants as happened last

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 343.

³⁸ Khārak is a small island (most probably the island of Kharg) 300 miles from Bahrain and 240 miles from Baṣrah. It is described as three miles square and it is stated that it normally took a day and a night to reach it from ‘Abbadān. Idrīsī, *Nuzhat al-Mushtāq*, vol. 1, p. 381; Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, vol. 2, p. 165; Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Masālik*, p. 61.

³⁹ The text mentions the name “Abū Jayfar”, which has no logical meaning or historical support. Thus, it seems better to be read it as Abū Ja‘far. “وفيها لقي العدو أبا جعفر بخارث فأصيب هو وأهل مركبه.” Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Tārīkh*, p. 343.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 344.

time, they chose this time one of the minor branches of the Shaṭṭ al-‘Arab as their route, namely the River al-Amīr. Initially, the Mayd were able to kill and take captive many of the people of the area, but very soon the ‘Abbāsīd forces realized the situation and managed to engage with them, to defeat them, and to obtain the release of the captives.⁴¹ During the same period, the ‘Abbāsīds also had to endure piratic attacks against commercial ships and cities situated along the Red Sea coast. There the threat came this time from the other Sindī pirate group, the Kurk. Al-Ṭabarī reports that in 151/769 the Kurk launched a sea raid on Jeddah. The same was repeated in 153/770, which this time drove al-Manṣūr, who had just completed the rites of pilgrimage (*Hajj*), to return without delay to Baṣrah, where he ordered the preparation of a naval expedition to pursue the attackers.⁴²

Surprisingly, after this naval expedition, news of further attacks by pirates against Muslim coastal cities ceased throughout the reign of al-Manṣūr. This may indicate the success of the decisive measures that were taken by al-Manṣūr to confront the perpetrators of maritime piratic activities. Nonetheless, without doubt these measures did not consist in building a capable fleet that could secure stability in the Gulf as much as in his awareness of an important factor regarding this issue. This was the fact that stability in the Gulf waters was closely connected to political stability and the affirmation of ‘Abbāsīd authority in Sind, which was the homeland of many of the pirate groups, who for most of the time were supported by the Hindu

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 345.

⁴²Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 33, 42.

principalities in the area. Al-Manṣūr succeeded in achieving his goal by appointing competent governors in that part of the empire, such as Hishām b. 'Amr al-Taghlawbī, who was appointed in 152/769. Unlike his predecessors, Hishām followed an offensive policy towards those local Hindu principalities that had not yet been subjugated to Muslim authority. During his governorship, which lasted six years, he was able to stretch the 'Abbāsīd authority over the wide area of Multān and to capture Qandahār in eastern Afghanistan, as well as the town of Nārrand after a successful naval expedition led by 'Umar b. Jamal.⁴³

After the death of al-Manṣūr, Caliph al-Mahdī tried to adhere to the policy of his father but did not attain the same degree of success, at least at the beginning. The reason was that Hishām's successors in Sind fell victim to the Qaysī-Yamanī tribal struggle amongst the Arab settlers in the area.⁴⁴ While the 'Abbāsīd governors in the region were busy with the tribal struggle happening there, the Hindu princes seized the opportunity and moved to regain the areas that had been previously conquered by Hishām. This also led to a resurgence by some of the Sindī groups, such as the Zuṭṭ against the 'Abbāsīd authority.⁴⁵ At this point, al-Mahdī found that he had no alternative but to dispatch a punitive naval expedition against Sind and in particular against the inhabitants of the town of Bārbad, which was probably the locus of the rebels and pirates. Describing this expedition, historical sources indicate that initially

⁴³Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 543-4; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 373; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, p. 423; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 115; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 45, 53.

⁴⁴Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 398.

al-Mahdī commissioned Muḥriz b. Ibrāhīm to go to Baṣrah to supervise the preparation of the expedition and supply it with everything needed. The command of the expedition was handed to 'Abd al-Malik b. Shihāb b. al-Masma'ī, who set sail late in 159/776. The expeditionary force comprised 10,000 soldiers, the size of this company clearly reflecting the significance of the expected goals. The troops could be categorized as follows: a levied force of 2,000 from the people of Baṣrah, led by Ghassān b. 'Abd al-Malik; 1,000 volunteers from Baṣrah, led by al-Mundhir b. Muḥammad al-Jārūdī; 1,500 volunteers, who were stationed in the frontier garrisons (*murābiṭāt*), led by 'Abd al-Wāḥid b. 'Abd al-Malik; a further 700 from the people of Syria, led by Zayd b. Ḥabāb al-Madhḥijī; and finally 4,000 of the Aswāriyyīn and the Sayābijah.⁴⁶ Early in 160/777, the expedition reached the town of Bārbad and, by the second day, the town had been invested. The raid was so sudden that within two days Bārbad was conquered. The 'Abbāsid forces entered the town from all directions, set fire to it, and put to death all the fighting forces inside. The losses on the Muslim side were so negligible that, in all, only around 20 men were killed. The end of the campaign was not, however, so gratifying to the Muslims as the beginning, since about 1,000 of them succumbed to an epidemic of scurvy (*ḥumām qurr*). Moreover, many more perished on the return home when their ships were struck by a storm in the Persian Gulf. Those who survived reached Baṣrah carrying

⁴⁵*Ibid.*; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 544.

⁴⁶Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 116; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 234; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 140; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 8, p. 228.

with them some of the booty and captives, who included the daughter of the ruler of Bārbad.⁴⁷

In dealing with the Zuṭṭ movement in Sind, it was sufficient for al-Mahdī to send his Mawlā, al-Layth b. Ṭarīf, who managed to finish off their movement in one month. When the Zuṭṭ rebelled again in 165/781, al-Mahdī had to send enforcements from among the people of Baṣrah to al-Layth, who again was soon able to bring the situation under control.⁴⁸

Al-Layth b. Ṭarīf continued to govern Sind for some years to come, during which he managed to forcibly put an end to the Arab tribal struggle in the region on the one hand and to restrain the ambitions of the local Hindu principalities on the other. This undoubtedly helped to consolidate political stability in the region and consequently reduce the opportunities for Sindī pirates to work as freely as they had done previously. The silence of historical sources seems to testify to this, as no mention can be found in them of piracy in the Persian Gulf or military expeditions launched against the people of Sind throughout the rest of al-Mahdī's Caliphate.

But tranquillity in the Gulf did not last long as piracy resumed from the early years of al-Rashīd's Caliphate.⁴⁹ Again, this came as an expected result of the renewed political unrest occasioned by a recrudescence of inter-tribal feuding among Arabs in

⁴⁷Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 117, 128; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 235; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 140; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 8, p. 236.

⁴⁸Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 398.

Sind following the dismissal of al-Layth from his post around the year 171/ 788.⁵⁰

While al-Rashīd failed to bring the situation under control in Sind by appointing capable governors who would also contain the pirate groups in their own homeland,⁵¹ he turned his attention instead to means of enhancing the 'Abbāsid fleet operating in the Gulf in order to be able to counter these Sindi pirates. The 'Abbāsid anti-piracy naval operations reached their climax between the years 177/794 and 179/796, during which the 'Abbāsid fleet succeeded in establishing stability in the Persian Gulf after inflicting heavy losses on the pirate groups which included many of their valuable warships (*bawārij*).⁵² The supremacy of the 'Abbāsid fleet in the Gulf seems to have remained throughout the reign of al-Rashīd as there is no indication of any piratic activities during this time.

But reports of acts of piracy in the Gulf recommence and became much more frequent during the reigns of al-Ma'mūn and al-Mu'taṣim. This may be explained in light of the civil war between the two brothers al-Ma'mūn and al-Amīn. The civil war had paralysed the power of the central government and the capital, Baghdad, along with the Sawād area, which became sucked into the eddy of that war for five years, during which Baṣrah as a trade centre was brought to ruin. The situation only grew worse during the period of the Zuṭṭ rebellion, which threatened the terrestrial

⁴⁹ Ibn Khayyāt, *Tārīkh*, p. 368.

⁵⁰ Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 409; Ibn Khayyāt, *Tārīkh*, p. 380.

⁵¹ This failure is clearly indicated by the fact that within a period of 13 years more than ten governors held the governorship of Sind. For full lists of their names, see Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 409; Ibn Khayyāt, *Tārīkh*, p. 380.

and maritime trade routes between Baṣrah and Baghdad for 20 years. All these circumstances, which endured for more than 25 years, led eventually to the gradual shift of the trade centre of Iraq from the port of al-Ubullah, near Baṣrah, to a more secure harbour, namely Sīrāf on the Persian seacoast near Shīrāz. The port of Sīrāf was, in fact, deeper than the former, which meant that it was more convenient for the large trading vessels, especially those coming from China. All these factors led Sīrāf quickly to become the main trading anchorage on the Persian Gulf.⁵³ Transporting merchandise between Sīrāf and Baṣrah was done by loading the goods from Baṣrah in small ships which then sailed to Sīrāf. There the goods would be transferred into large ships and *vice versa* for the movement of goods in the direction of Baṣrah.⁵⁴ It is worth noting, however, that the shift to Sīrāf resulted in the small ships sailing from Baṣrah now having to sail the long distance to Sīrāf, which usually took seven days if the winds were favourable.⁵⁵ This meant that these small Baṣran ships became much more vulnerable to piratic attacks compared with the large ships heading toward Sīrāf, which usually for defence carried on board marine fighters and Greek fire-throwers (*naḡāṭah*).⁵⁶

⁵² Ibn Khayyāt, *Tārīkh*, p. 368.

⁵³ This commercial shift led to an economic boom in Sīrāf. Muslim geographers expatiate in describing the city and its wealth. Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 3, pp. 394-5; Idrīsī, *Nuzhat al-Mushtāq*, vol. 1, p. 410; Iṣṭakhrī, *Masālik*, pp. 128-9.

⁵⁴ Hourani, *Arab Seafaring*, pp. 68-70.

⁵⁵ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 3, pp. 394-5.

⁵⁶ Maqdisī, *Aḥsan*, p. 12; Hourani, *Arab Seafaring*, p. 70.

With the end of the civil war and upon his return to Iraq, al-Ma'mūn sought to re-establish the authority of the central government over the various regions of the Caliphate including the Persian Gulf. Thus, in 210/825, he ordered a large naval expedition to be launched from Baṣrah against the pirates of the island of Bahrain who used to attack ships coming from Iran, India, and China.⁵⁷ Again, in 213/829, he ordered the dismissal of Muḥammad b. 'Abbād from the admiralty of the Persian Gulf and replaced him with Ghassān b. 'Abbād,⁵⁸ an action which could have meant the beginning of the central government's refocus toward the Persian Gulf with the aim of reasserting its authority there. A similar action was taken by al-Mu'taṣim in 225/821 when he deposed Aḥmad b. 'Ubaydallāh al-'Anbarī from his post as admiral of the Persian Gulf. However, the latter seems to have been reappointed as he is mentioned as leading a naval expedition in the following year (226/822).⁵⁹

Regarding the direction of these expeditions, it seems clear that they targeted the islands to which the pirates resorted in the Persian Gulf such as the island of Bahrain.⁶⁰

With regard to the outcome of these expeditions, it seems that in most cases they were attended with success. Al-Mas'ūdī, for instance, mentions that one of the greatest achievements of Caliph al-Mu'taṣim was his naval expeditions against the

⁵⁷Hourani, *Arab Seafaring*, p. 66.

⁵⁸Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Tārīkh*, p. 390.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 393-4.

⁶⁰Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Masālik*, p. 60.

pirates. He adds that the outcome of these naval operations was the capturing of many of the pirates' ships (*bawārij*) as well as many of their crew members who previously had managed to dominate the entire coast of Fārs, 'Umān, and Baṣrah.⁶¹

It is clear that, after the time of Caliph Mu'taṣim, offensives against the main bases of the pirates in Sind were undertaken solely by the 'Abbāsid governors and their allies in the region. Historical accounts indicate that during the time of al-Ma'mūn, al-Faḍl b. Māhān, a *mawlā* of the Banū Sāmh, along with some of his followers, independently managed to attack and conquer the Indian coastal town of Sindān.⁶² Following this success, al-Faḍl did not hesitate to declare his full submission to the authority of the 'Abbāsid Caliph in Baghdad. After his death, al-Faḍl was succeeded by his son as the new ruler of this small Muslim principality. As part of his military operations, the latter is said to have amassed a fleet of 70 warships (*bawārij*), with which he raided the Mayd, killed a great number of them, and conquered the town of Fālī.⁶³

Sources also mention that 'Imrān b. Mūsā b. Yaḥya al-Barmakī, who succeeded his father as governor of Sind in 221/836, launched a military expedition on that year against the Qīqān area, which was inhabited by the Zuṭṭ. 'Imrān was able to defeat the Zuṭṭ and to establish a new town, named al-Bayḍā', which he adopted as a

⁶¹Mas'ūdī, *Tanbih*, p. 355; Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Tārīkh*, pp. 394-5.

⁶²Sindān is a town located midway between Daybul and al-Manṣūrah at a distance of half a farsakh from the seacoast. Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 3, p. 266.

garrison base for his forces. 'Imrān also did not forget to launch an expedition against the Mayd, during which 3,000 of them were reported to have been put to death. Moreover, it was not long before 'Imrān, this time in collaboration with the Zuṭṭ, launched another aggressive attack against the Mayd.⁶⁴

In spite of the heavy losses suffered by the pirate groups, whether from among the Mayd or other groups, in their confrontations with the 'Abbāsīds, this clearly did not restrain them from continuing their piracy, which seems to have been the only profession in which they really excelled. Naval expeditions against sea pirates increased noticeably during the reign of al-Wāthiq. Under the instruction of Aḥmad b. Rabāḥ, the governor of Baṣrah, Ibrāhīm b. Hishām led three naval expeditions in consecutive years (228-230/843-845), during the last of which Ibrāhīm is reported to have pursued the pirates as far as the proximal part of Sarrast, in Sind, where he took many of its inhabitants as captives.⁶⁵

Undoubtedly, the shadow of piracy and its adverse effects on the sea trade in the Persian Gulf were the reason behind these consecutive expeditions and the determination of the central government in Baghdad to eradicate it. This determination was also shared by the people of Baṣrah, amongst whom many volunteered to join these expeditions. In 231/846, for instance, sources mention that some of the volunteers' ships were wrecked between Janābah and Sīnnīn and many

⁶³Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 545; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, p. 424.

⁶⁴Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 544-5; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 626; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 577.

of them lost their lives.⁶⁶ Among other measures that the central government took to limit the adverse effects of piracy and encourage the movement of trade via the Gulf was the decision of Caliph al-Wāthiq to cancel the tax imposed on trading vessels coming from India and China.⁶⁷ This decision was no doubt intended to enhance the position of Baṣrah as a trading centre as well as to compensate traders for any losses that they might suffer through piracy.

6.2 Naval Organization

6.2.1 Dockyards and Naval Bases

With the conquest of Syria and Egypt, a long stretch of seacoast came into the Muslims' hands, which in turn required protection against their only enemy at sea, the Byzantines. Initially, the Muslims adhered to a purely defensive strategy, concentrating on fortifying (*taḥṣīn*) the coastal towns and fortresses and organizing (*tartīb*) fighters in them, as happened in Acre and Tyre on the Syrian coast.⁶⁸ This strategy, which proved to be ineffective in many cases, continued from the days of Caliph 'Umar (13-23/634-44) till the end of the first half of 'Uthmān's Caliphate (23-35/644-56). It was only then that the Muslims embarked on a new maritime policy, which this time concentrated on taking the offensive in dealing with their enemy, especially in the new climate of increased Muslim maritime expertise and

⁶⁵ Ibn Khayyāt, *Tārīkh*, p. 395.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 483; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 150.

⁶⁸ Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 139, 152; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 4, p. 258.

more frequent Byzantine attacks against the of Muslim coastlands.⁶⁹ This maritime offensive policy centred on building the necessary fleets to confront the Byzantines' fleet before they could reach Muslim territories, as well as on enabling the Muslims to extend their conquests beyond their shores.⁷⁰ Achieving this goal required in turn well-furnished naval bases and dockyards (sing. *dār al-ṣinā'ah*), which were the real nucleus of any naval power. Therefore, since the early days of the Umayyad Caliphate, the Muslims did not content themselves with utilizing the naval bases and dockyards that they inherited from the Byzantines in North Africa and Syria, but also sought to build their own.

Among the naval bases mentioned during the first century of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate were Qulzum and Alexandria, that of Qulzum being of particular importance. In antiquity and in the early period of Islam, Qulzum owed much of its importance to its being a point of departure for shipping in the Red Sea. Trajan's canal, uniting the Nile at the Egyptian Babylon with Qulzum, had become silted up, but in 23/643 Caliph 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb had dredged and reopened it under the name *Khalīj Amīr al-Mu'minīn*.⁷¹ It was through this canal that the corn ships of Fustāṭ would pass to Qulzum and from there to the ports of Jār and Jiddah, on the eastern coast of the Red

⁶⁹Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 4, pp. 4, 260; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 2, p. 489.

⁷⁰The first fruit of this offensive policy was the conquest of Cyprus in 28/648 and the destruction of the Byzantines' fleet in the naval battle of *Dhāt al-Ṣawārī* in 34/655. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 4, pp. 258-262; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 181-2; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 2, p. 488; vol. 3, p. 13.

⁷¹Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 177; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 4, p. 100; Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, p. 79; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 2, p. 466; Qalqashandī, *Subḥ*, vol. 3, p. 331.

Sea, to provision the inhabitants of the holy cities of Makkah and Madīnah.⁷² In 145/762, Caliph al-Manṣūr is reported to have partly filled in the canal as a means of strangling the 'Alid rebels by preventing the flow of provisions to their stronghold in Madīnah.⁷³ Regarding the Jewish merchants called the Rādhāniyya⁷⁴, Ibn Khurradādhbih mentions that they came from the south of France to al-Faramāh, whence they carried their wares 35 farsakhs on camels to Qulzum, where they loaded them on ships which sailed to India and China.⁷⁵ In addition to the numerous references that they make to the work of building and repairing ships in Qulzum, Greek papyri of Aphrodito report that the port of Qulzum was also used as a naval base, most probably against the Red Sea pirates, whose activities had been notorious since Roman times.⁷⁶

The port of Alexandria retained much of its fame in the Islamic period as one of the most important naval centres in the eastern Mediterranean. Since the time of the Ptolemies and later the Byzantines, Alexandria with its western and eastern harbours was renowned for being the largest and busiest commercial and industrial centre in the Mediterranean. It seems, however, that out of all the industrial arts carried out in Alexandria, such as fabric, glass, and coral production, shipbuilding was the most

⁷² No less than 3,000 camel loads, counted by al-Maqdisī, were exported every week to Ḥijāz. Maqdisī, *Aḥsan*, p. 195.

⁷³ Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 145; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 603, 621; Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, vol. 3, p. 332; *EI*², s.v. "Kulzum".

⁷⁴ For more discussion on the Jewish Rādhāniyya, see *EI*², s.v. "Rādhāniyya".

⁷⁵ Ibn Khurradādhbih, *al-Masālik*, p. 153; Fahmy, *Sea-power*, p. 27; *EI*², s.v. "Kulzum".

⁷⁶ Hourani, *Arab Seafaring*, pp. 20, 34; *EI*², s.v. "Milāḥa"; Fahmy, *Sea-power*, pp. 24-7.

important of all.⁷⁷ It is not surprising therefore that, since its conquest by 'Amr b. al-
'Āṣ in 21/642, Alexandria was a vital city for the Muslim naval power as it provided
ships and sailors for the fleet as well as a base from which the Muslims were able to
launch their first raids across the Mediterranean.⁷⁸

Rosetta, Damietta, and Tinnīs were also important naval bases in Egypt since the
early days of Islam. While al-Maḡdisī describes Damietta as being within ear-shot of
the Mediterranean, where the Nile flowed into it, al-Ya'qūbī states that the Nile
divided into two at Damietta, one branch flowing into Lake Tinnīs, in which ships
and large boats sailed and the other flowing into the Mediterranean.⁷⁹ Besides its
importance as trading centre, the port of Damietta acquired great military importance
after the conquest of Crete in 211/826, for it then became the main base providing
arms and provisions to the Cretan Muslims. Because of this Damietta became a main
target for Byzantine raids from 238/853 onwards.⁸⁰

Meanwhile, Tinnīs, founded in an island near Damietta, is reported to have been an
ancient town with a harbour for ships coming from Syria and Maghrib.⁸¹ According
to Ibn Iyās, the town was populous till 573/1177 and was finally destroyed in

⁷⁷Fahmy, *Sea-power*, p. 27.

⁷⁸Sālim, *Tārīkh al-Baḥrīyah*, pp. 25-8; Fahmy, *Sea-power*, p. 28; *El*², s.v. "Milāḥa".

⁷⁹Maḡdisī, *Aḥṣan*, p. 202; Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 96.

⁸⁰Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 193-4; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 117; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 349; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 488; Brooks, "Relation", p. 385; Archibald, *Naval Power*, p. 141; Fahmy, *Sea-power*, p. 31; Sālim, *Tārīkh al-Baḥrīyah*, pp. 46-9.

⁸¹Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 96.

624/1226.⁸² Lake Tinnīs was not deep and al-Ṭabarī mentions that after the Byzantines had sacked Damietta in 238/853, their ships were unable to sail because they feared that they would stick in the mud. They therefore went to Ushtūm, a harbour about four farsakhs away from Tinnīs, having a wall and an iron gate constructed by Caliph al-Mu'taṣim.⁸³

Barqah and Tūnis, in North Africa, also had naval bases. These had been founded by the Umayyads and continued to operate throughout the 'Abbāsid Caliphate. From them raids were directed against the Byzantines' islands in the eastern part of the Mediterranean, especially Sicily and Sardinia. Tūnis, however, was of particular importance as it owned a large dockyard (*dār al-ṣinā'ah*). According to Muslim historians, this was the oldest arsenal to be established by Muslims in North Africa. The Umayyad governor al-Ḥassān b. al-Nu'mān is credited with its construction in about 80/699, for which he brought from Egypt 1,000 Copt families to supply this new naval dockyard with experienced workmen.⁸⁴ While describing the dockyard of Tūnis, al-Bakrī and Ibn Qutaybah mention a lake, 24 miles long, east of Tūnis, in the centre of which was an island, two miles in length. Here the dockyard was founded and linked to the harbour, 12 miles away, by means of a canal. The location of the dockyard was thus unique as it provided an excellent shelter for ships from strong

⁸² Ibn Iyās, *Tārīkh Miṣr*, vol. 1, p. 50.

⁸³ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 194.

⁸⁴ Bakrī, *al-Mughrib*, p. 38; Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, p. 253; Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, vol. 2, p. 190; al-Mālikī, *Riyāḍ al-Nufūs*, p. 37.

winds and winter storms.⁸⁵ The harbour, the entrance to which could be closed by a chain, was defended on the north by a strong wall and on the south by a stone-built castle, known as the Castle of the Chain (*Qaṣr al-Silsilah*).⁸⁶

Syria also acquired naval bases from the very beginning of the Umayyad period. Al-Balādhurī points out that Mu'āwiyah restored Acre and Tyre at the time of the expedition against Cyprus, and in 42/662 he transplanted Persian colonists from Ba'labakk, Ḥimṣ, and Antioch to the cities of *Jund al-Urdun*, namely Tyre and Acre.⁸⁷ In 49/669, the Byzantine fleets raided the Syrian coastal towns, which did not yet have arsenals. Mu'āwiyah thereupon built dockyards in the fortified city of Acre, situated on the Palestinian seaboard, to act as the main naval base of the district of *Jund al-Urdūn*.⁸⁸ The Umayyad Caliph 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān is reported to have restored Tyre, Qayṣariyah (Caesarea), and the suburbs of Acre, which had fallen into ruin after a series of Byzantine raids during the period of Ibn al-Zubayr's rebellion.⁸⁹ When, later, Ḥishām b. 'Abd al-Malik wished to purchase a mill and storehouses from a man called Abū al-Mu'ayt, and the latter refused to sell them, he had the arsenal removed from Acre to Tyre, where he built magazines and a dockyard. Thus, Tyre replaced Acre under the Marwānids as a naval station and remained so until 247/861 when the 'Abbāsid Caliph al-Mutawakkil ordered the

⁸⁵ Bakrī, *al-Mughrib*, p. 38; Ibn Qutaybah, *al-Imāmah*, pt. 2, p. 111.

⁸⁶ Bakrī, *al-Mughrib*, p. 39.

⁸⁷ Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 140.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*; Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 88.

transfer of shipbuilding from Tyre to Acre again. He also ordered the distribution of the fleets and naval forces among all the Syrian coastal towns.⁹⁰ In his description of Acre, the Persian traveller Nāṣir-i Khusraw mentions that the harbour of Acre had a chain fixed across its entrance which used to be lowered until it was deep enough in the water to allow ships to pass into the harbour. It was then tightened to prevent any enemy ship from getting inside to attack the base.⁹¹

Regarding Tyre, Muslim geographers point out that it was a strongly fortified city surrounded by the sea on all sides. The city was only accessible from the mainland through a single gate to which a bridge led, and almost all the way around, the city was fortified by a wall which rose straight out of the sea. Its harbour, encircled by triple walls, was gated by a chain, which was tightened across every night to prevent the enemy's ships from sneaking into it.⁹² Al-Ya'qūbī affirms that the city contained a dockyard (*dār al-ṣinā'ah*) and that from Tyre the Caliph's ships would set out on expeditions against the Byzantines.⁹³

Lādhīqīyah, Ṣaydā, Beirut, and Ṭarābulus al-Shām were also amongst the principal naval centres on the Syrian coast. According to al-Ya'qūbī, Ṭarābulus possessed a

⁸⁹ Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 140, 170.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 140; Qudāmāh, *Kharāj*, p. 188; Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 88; Fahmy, *Sea-power*, p. 53; Kennedy, "Towns", p. 95.

⁹¹ Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Safarnāmah*, p. 51.

⁹² Maqdisī, *Aḥsan*, p. 186.

⁹³ Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 88. For further description of Tyre, see Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 1, pp. 124, 148; vol. 2, pp. 17, 216; vol. 3, p. 434; vol. 4, pp. 143-4; Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥlat*, pp. 212-3; Fahmy, *Sea-power*, pp. 53-4; Sālim, *al-Baḥrīyah*, p. 51.

magnificent harbour which was so large that it could offer anchorage to 1,000 ships.⁹⁴ An excellent description of the town under the Fāṭimids is given by Nāṣir-i Khusraw. He states that the whole countryside consisted of fields and gardens growing sugar-cane, citrons, bananas, oranges, lemons, and dates. The town was protected on three sides by the sea and, on the landward side, by a wall with a broad ditch. On the eastern side of the city there was a battlemented fortress of glazed stone, on the top of which ballista machines (*'aradāt*) were placed to defend the town against any possible naval attack by the Byzantines.⁹⁵ Beirut was one of the districts of Damascus (*Jund Dimashq*) and, like Acre, Tyre, and many other harbours of that time, its harbour had a chain that could be fixed across the entrance.⁹⁶ Like many other Syrian coastal towns, Beirut was also considered a *ribāṭ* and the great Imam of Syria, al-Awzā'ī, is reported to have installed himself there and to have been among those who took part in the expedition against the Byzantines in 140/758.⁹⁷

Ṭarsūs, suited on the coast of Asia Minor, was also an important naval base during the early 'Abbāsid era. According to Muslim authors, after a raid against the Byzantine territories in 162/779, al-Ḥasan b. Qaḥṭabah brought Caliph al-Mahdī a description of the ruined town of Ṭarsūs and advised him of the great advantage of building up and garrisoning the city to increase the power of Islam in the war against

⁹⁴ Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 88.

⁹⁵ Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Safarnāmah*, pp. 47-8.

⁹⁶ Maqdisī, *Aḥsan*, pp. 24, 65.

⁹⁷ Basawī, *al-Ma'rifah*, vol. 2, p. 408; *ET*², s.v. "Bayrūt"; Qudāmāh, *Kharāj*, p. 188.

the enemy.⁹⁸ However, it was not until 171/787, when Caliph al-Rashīd learned that the Byzantines intended to restore the town, that he ordered Harthama b. A'yan to pre-empt them and rebuild it. Harthama thereupon entrusted Faraj b. Sulaym with its reconstruction and the town was finally rebuilt in 172/788 and populated initially by 3,000 Khurāsānī troops along with 2,000 warriors who were brought from Maṣṣīṣah and Anṭākiyah in return for an increase in their pay.⁹⁹ It was not too long before the city became prosperous and its population was continually increased by immigrants from adjoining lands, who wished in their glowing enthusiasm for Islam to engage in the *jihād* till they met their death.¹⁰⁰ The importance of Ṭarsūs for the 'Abbāsids lay in the fact that its very close proximity to the Byzantine territories by sea and land indicated its usefulness as a principal base from which to launch military expeditions against their enemy by sea and land. In this connection, Qudāmah mentions Ṭarsūs as being among the Syrian towns from which the holy war was pursued by sea and land.¹⁰¹ Reflecting the importance of Ṭarsūs as an important naval base in 'Abbāsīd times is a passage in al-Ṭabarī, who writes that after the 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Mu'tadid put down the revolt of Waṣīf al-Khādim in 287/900, he ordered that all the ships based at Ṭarsūs along with all their equipment, which the Muslims had employed in waging war, be burnt. The account proceeds to recount how about 50 old vessels, on which a great deal of money had been spent in their construction and which could

⁹⁸Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 200; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, p. 310.

⁹⁹Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 200-1; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, pp. 310-1; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 4, p. 133, Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 234; Yaqūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 410.

¹⁰⁰Fahmy, *Sea-power*, p. 60.

¹⁰¹Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, p. 86.

not be replaced at that time, were among those burned. The consequence of this action, according to al-Ṭabarī, was great damage to the Muslim power and a relative increase in that of the Byzantines, who were thus safeguarded from any Muslim attack by sea.¹⁰² Nevertheless, despite the loss of these ships, Ṭarsūs soon regained its naval power under the admiralship of Leo of Tripoli, who, by the end of the third/tenth century, became the terror of the Aegean.¹⁰³ Ṭarsūs continues to be mentioned in the historical sources as a very important naval base in the struggle against the Byzantines until 357/965 when it was finally conquered by Nicephorus.¹⁰⁴

In Iraq, the centre of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate, the harbours of Baṣrah and its suburb town of al-Ubullah were the main sea-gate of the whole region of Iraq to the open sea via the Persian Gulf. In addition, to their significance as commercial and trading centres, Baṣrah and al-Ubullah were also very important naval bases during the early period of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate. It was from there that the 'Abbāsids launched their naval expeditions against the pirates throughout the Persian Gulf as far as Sind.¹⁰⁵ In addition, the 'Abbāsids employed the fleet based in these two Iraqi cities to dispatch their land forces effectively and in sufficient numbers to disturbed areas

¹⁰² Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 10, p. 80.

¹⁰³ Brooks, "Relations", p. 354.

¹⁰⁴ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 4, p. 29; Fahmy, *Sea-power*, p. 61; Sālim, *al-Baḥrīyah*, pp. 52-3.

¹⁰⁵ Ibn Khayyāt, *Tārīkh*, pp. 390, 393-5; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 33, 42, 116; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 234; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 140; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntazam*, vol. 8, p. 228; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 393.

in other parts of the state such as 'Umān and Sind.¹⁰⁶ Baṣrah, founded in 17/638 by order of Caliph 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, lay some four farsakhs west of the Shaṭṭ al-'Arab, with which it was connected by two canals, Nahr al-Ubullah on the south and al-Ma'qil on the north.¹⁰⁷ Navigation in these two canals was affected by tidal ebb and flow, by the expert management of which, seagoing ships of lesser tonnage could reach Baṣrah's harbour of al-Kallā'.¹⁰⁸ Large ships, however, did not proceed to Baṣrah, but instead docked at al-Ubullah, situated on the western bank of the Shaṭṭ al-'Arab, where their cargoes were then off-loaded onto smaller craft that could reach not only Baṣrah but also Baghdad and even further north.¹⁰⁹ Unlike Baṣrah, al-Ubullah, which was the old Apolougus that had been founded by Khusraw Ardashīr and survived into Muslim times, is also reported to have had a dockyard.¹¹⁰ One of the difficulties facing ships heading for al-Ubullah was the treacherous shoal at the estuary of the Shaṭṭ al-'Arab near 'Abbādān in which ships were often wrecked. To keep ships off these shallows, three wooden scaffolds (*khashbāṭ*) were erected some distance offshore, supporting a watchtower with guards, who lit beacons at night to

¹⁰⁶ Ibn Khayyāt, *Tārīkh*, p. 365; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 462-4; vol. 8, pp. 23, 42, 116-7, 128; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, pp. 93, 234; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 140.

¹⁰⁷ Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣūrat al-Arḍ*, p. 235; Maqdisī, *Aḥsan*, p. 117; Nāṣar-i Khusraw, *Safarnāmah*, pp. 47-8; Idrīsī, *Nuzhat*, p. 384.

¹⁰⁸ Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣūrat al-Arḍ*, p. 235; Maqdisī, *Aḥsan*, p. 118; Iṣṭakhrī, *Masālik*, pp. 80-1.

¹⁰⁹ When founding Baghdad, al-Manṣūr is reported to have assessed the role of its location in the following manner: "This is the Tigris. There is no obstacle between it and China; everything in the sea comes to us by it, and the provisions from al-Jazīrah and Armenia and from what lies beyond them come to us. And this is the Euphrates. Everything from Damascus and al-Raqqah and from what lies beyond them comes to us by it." Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 614.

¹¹⁰ *El I*, s.v. "al-Ubulla"; Hourani, *Arab Seafaring*, p. 69.

forewarn arriving ships.¹¹¹ A second danger was a large whirlpool (*hawr*, pl. *hawārāt*) inside the Shaṭṭ al-‘Arab close to al-Ubullah’s harbour, where many ships met their doom until an ‘Abbāsid princess reportedly solved the problem by bearing the expense of dumping large quantities of rocks on the site.¹¹²

6.2.2 Warships and Naval Tactics

Safīnah, *markab*, and *qārib* were the term most commonly used by the Arabs, since pre-Islamic times and throughout the Umayyad era, to denote means of transport that could ride on water. With the exception of the suggestion that the *qārib* was most likely a small boat, historical sources as well as Arabic dictionaries do not offer any definite or significantly descriptive features enabling us to distinguish one from another.¹¹³ By ‘Abbāsid times, however, new terms for ships came into use. The available evidence offered by the different historical and *adab* sources indicates that ships used by Muslims during this time were of different sizes, shapes, and capability. Amongst various types of warship mentioned is the *bārijah* (pl. *bawārij*), which was used primarily in the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, and most probably was a ship of Indian origin. The term *bawārij* was very closely associated in early Islamic sources with a type of warship widely used by the Mayd pirates, who raided across the Indian Ocean and on many occasions as far as the mouth of the

¹¹¹ Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 1, pp. 106, 149; Idrīsī, *Nuzhat al-Mushtāq*, vol. 1, p. 358; Iṣṭakhri, *Masālik*, pp. 32, 80; Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Safarnāmah*, p. 151.

¹¹² Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣūrat al-Arḍ*, p. 237; Iṣṭakhri, *Masālik*, p. 32; Hourani, *Arab Seafaring*, p. 69; *Et*, s.v. “Ubullā”.

Tigris and the southern part of the Red Sea.¹¹⁴ The sinister connotations of this word led in course of time to its further development to mean *sharr*, signifying 'evil' in Arabic. Ibn Manẓūr as well as Ibn Sīdah point out that when the word *bārijah* is applied to a person, it means a person "full of evil".¹¹⁵ The first clear indication of the use by Muslims of this type of warship comes in the time of the 'Abbāsid Caliph al-Ma'mūn when, as al-Balādhurī mentions, 70 *bawārij*, led by Muḥammad b. al-Faḍl b. Māhān, departed from Sindān and raided the Mayd's town of Fālī in Sind.¹¹⁶ Al-Ṭabarī includes a note on the crew of such a ship while speaking of the events of the year 251/865. He mentions that ten ships (*sufun*) called *bawārij* were employed against the Turks in Baghdad and that each of them was crewed by 25 men, including the chief sailors (*ashtiyām*), three fire-throwers (*naḡāṭūn*), one carpenter (*najjār*), one baker (*khabbāz*), and 39 oarsmen and marines (*jadāfūn* and *muqātilah*).¹¹⁷

The *shānī*, *shāniyyah*, or *shānī* (pl. *shawānī*), a vessel of the galley type, was the most popular warship used by Muslims in the Mediterranean.¹¹⁸ It is described as a two-banked vessel, with a special officer in charge of each bank and, like its counterpart

¹¹³See, for example, the accounts of the naval battle of Dhāt al-Ṣawārī (34/655) in which these terms are used: Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ*, p. 190; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 4, pp. 261, 290.

¹¹⁴Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 2, p. 20; *idem*, *al-Tanbīh*, pp. 49, 355; Khalīfah, *Tārīkh*, pp. 368, 393; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 544-5.

¹¹⁵Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, vol. 2, p. 213; Ibn Sīdah, *Mukhaṣṣaṣ*, vol. 4, pt. 10, p. 26; Fahmy, *Sea-power*, p. 156; Nukhaylī, *al-Sufun*, p. 10.

¹¹⁶Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 543, 545; see also Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, p. 424.

¹¹⁷Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 307.

the Byzantine *dromon*, it had lateen sails, originally two and later three.¹¹⁹ The *shānī* was propelled by sails and oars and, according to Ibn Mammātī, it had 140 oars.¹²⁰ In addition to these 140 oarsmen, as one person usually manned each oar in the Arab warship, the vessel is mentioned to have carried on board an average of 150 foot soldiers (*muqātilah*).¹²¹ The ship was also reported to have been equipped with towers from which white naphtha was thrown against the enemy.¹²²

The term *shalandī* (pl. *shalandiyyāt*), was applied to a large warship believed to have been modelled on the largest and heaviest vessel of the Byzantine fleet, the *cumbarii*.¹²³ While describing the Byzantine raid against Damietta in 283/853, al-Ṭabarī gives some indication of the capacity of such a ship as he states that 100 Byzantine *shalandiyyāt* carried on board 5,000 men, an average of 50 to 100 men on each of them.¹²⁴ The main distinguishing feature of the *shalandī* was that it was a decked ship (*markab musaqqaf*), so that the soldiers could fight from above while the rowers plied their oars beneath them.¹²⁵ Besides building them, Muslims on some occasions would seize a large number of this type of warship from their traditional

¹¹⁸ *EI*², s.v. "Safīna".

¹¹⁹ Christides, "Byzantine Dromon", p. 118; *idem*, "Naval Warfare", p. 143; Fahmy, *Sea-power*, p. 123.

¹²⁰ Ibn Mammātī, *Qawānīn*, p. 340.

¹²¹ Abū Shāmah, *Kitāb al-Rawḍatayn*, vol. 2, p. 335.

¹²² Fahmy, *Sea-Power*, p. 132; Nukhaylī, *al-Sufun*, p. 84; Zaydān, *Tamaddun*, vol. 1, p. 210; Sālim, *al-Baḥrīyah*, p. 133.

¹²³ Fahmy, *Sea-power*, p. 130.

¹²⁴ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 194.

enemy the Byzantines. Ibn al-Athīr states, for instance, that in 244/858 a large Byzantine army sailed from Constantinople in 300 *shalandiyyāt* to Syracuse and that al-‘Abbās b. al-Faḍl was able to capture 100 of them.¹²⁶

The *tarīdah* (pl. *tarā'id*) was a Mediterranean transport ship. Besides being used on occasion to transport provisions and military equipment and troops, Muslim writers emphasize that this ship was specially built and equipped to transport war-horses and that it could carry up to 40 horses.¹²⁷ Unlike other cargo ships, the *tarīdah* was open at the rear to facilitate the embarking and disembarking of the horses.¹²⁸

Amongst the large ships used specially for freight was the *qarqūr* (pl. *qarāqīr*). This type of ship was known to the Arabs since pre-Islamic time and was mentioned later as one of the vessels that took part in the naval expedition against the southern coast of Fārs in the time of Caliph ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb.¹²⁹

In addition to these warships used in the open seas, there were numerous types of river craft that Muslims used in ‘Abbāsīd times for both military and civil purposes.

The Baghdadi, al-Azdī b. al-Muṭahhar (d. fourth/tenth century) gives in his *Ḥikāyāt* a

¹²⁵ Ibn Mammātī, *Qawānīn*, p. 340; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 114; Fahmy, *Sea-Power*, p. 131; Sālim, *al-Baḥrīyah*, p. 133.

¹²⁶ Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, pp. 113-4.

¹²⁷ Ibn Mammātī, *Qawānīn*, p. 339; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 10, p. 630; Abū Shāmah, *Kitāb al-Rawḍatayn*, vol. 2, p. 335; Ibn Mankalī, *al-Adillah*, p. 243.

¹²⁸ Fahmy, *Sea-power*, p. 137; Nukhaylī, *al-Sufūn*, p. 89.

list of nineteen of these craft, including the *shadhā*, *qārib*, *zabzab*, *sumayrī*, *jāsūs*, *ḥarrāqah*, and *ṭayyārāh*.¹³⁰ It seems clear that some of these names are descriptive, for example, the *ṭayyārāh* (flier), which was a small, fast craft. Besides being widely used by wealthy people of Baghdad, Baṣrah, and its neighbourhood for transport and pleasure, this type of craft is also mentioned as having been used for military purposes in time of war. Al-Mas'ūdī, for example, mentions that the fighting fleet of the Barīdīs in Baṣrah in 329/941 included *ṭayyārāt*.¹³¹

The *ḥarrāqah* (fire craft, pl. *ḥarrāqāt* or *ḥarārīq*) is often mentioned in the sense of warship to a boat equipped with catapults from which fire could be hurled at the enemy.¹³² On occasions, the *ḥarrāqah* is also reported to have been equipped with grappling-irons (*kalālīb*), which used to drag the enemy's burning boats from river passages or harbours.¹³³ When these craft were disarmed, they could be used for transport and pleasure. In this sense, Caliph al-Amīn is reported to have had five

¹²⁹Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 3, p. 162; Nukhaylī, *Sufun*, pp. 120-5; *ET*², s.v. "Safina". It is worth noting that the *qarqūr* is also mentioned in some of the prophetic *ḥadīths* as being the type of ship that Muslim sea martyrs would use for raids in paradise in the hereafter. Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, vol. 5, p. 90.

¹³⁰Azdī, *Ḥikāyāt*, p. 107.

¹³¹Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 4, p. 340; see also Fahmy, *Sea-power*, p. 163; Nukhaylī, *al-Sufun*, p. 92; Mez, *Renaissance*, p. 433; *ET*², s.v. "Safina".

¹³²Suyūṭī, *Tārīkh al-Khulafā'*, p. 302; Fahmy, *Sea-power*, p. 134; Nukhaylī, *al-Sufun*, p. 33; Zaydān, *al-Tamaddun*, vol. 1, p. 211.

¹³³Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 453.

luxury *ḥarrāqāt* constructed as pleasure boats in the Tigris, each in the shape of a lion, elephant, eagle, dolphin, or snake.¹³⁴

The *shadhā* (pl. *shadhawāt* or *shadh'āt*) was also mentioned as a troop-carrying craft. Al-Ṭabarī states that the *ḥarrāqah*, used to transport Caliph al-Amīn to Baghdad after his capitulation, was attacked on the way by Ṭāhir's troops, who were using *zawārīq* and *shadhawāt*.¹³⁵ During the long years of war between the 'Abbāsid forces and the Zanj rebels (255-267/869-881), the term *shadhawāt* was often associated with another type of troop-carrying craft, that is the *sumayriyyāt*, used by both parties.¹³⁶ The *sumayriyyāt* craft seem to have varied in size, some being large enough to require 20 oarsmen to propel them.¹³⁷ Their swift movement and manoeuvrability led to their sometimes being employed for scouting or secret services.¹³⁸

Constructing ships for the fleet was a labour involving very long and different stages of work. The first stage was providing the suitable timbers needed for building the different parts of the ship: hull, masts, keel, planking, and oars. Timbers used for shipbuilding differed from one dockyard to another according to the proximity of the

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 508; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 411; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 242; Suyūṭī, *Tārīkh al-Khulafā'*, p. 302; Nukhaylī, *al-Sufun*, pp. 32-7; Fahmy, *Sea-power*, pp. 134-6; Mez, *Renaissance*, p. 490; *EI*², s.v. "Safīna".

¹³⁵ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 484.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 9, pp. 420, 423, 521, 524, 543, 557-68, 590-2.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 9, 565.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 9, p. 439.

dockyard to the nearest source of available timber. While acacia (*ṣint*), lebek, lotus tree (*sidrah*), fig, and palm were very common trees in Egypt and thus were used in shipbuilding there, the pine tree (*ṣanawbar*), oak, and cedar were largely used in the Syrian dockyards as these types of timbers were drawn from the Syro-Lebanese forests.¹³⁹ In the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea, and the Indian Ocean it seems that in addition to coconut wood (*nārjil*), the teak (*sāj*) grown in the hills of southern India, Burma, and Indonesia was the most valuable and preferred timber for shipbuilding.¹⁴⁰

The techniques, as well as the materials, used in building the Muslim fleet during the early centuries of Islam also varied from one area to another. In the Mediterranean, Muslims used iron nails as a means of fastening the planks of the ship's hull whereas in the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean the planks were stitched together with fibre (*khiyāṭah*) and not nailed.¹⁴¹ Al-Jāḥiẓ states that the Umayyad governor al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf was the first to have constructed ships with their parts nailed (*musammarah*) together and not stitched (*mukharrazah*).¹⁴² Al-Mas'ūdī tries to explain the preference for stitching instead of nailing in ships sailing in the Red Sea by stating that the sea-water there corroded the iron nails so that they did not last

¹³⁹ Sālim, *al-Baḥriyah*, p. 24; Fahmy, *Sea-power*, pp. 67-79.

¹⁴⁰ Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 1, p. 163; Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥlat*, p. 154. Teak is described as "the most valuable of all known timbers. It is very durable, and once seasoned, teak timber does not split, crack, shrink, or alter its shape. In contact with iron, neither the iron nor the teak suffers. It is not very hard, is easily worked, and has great elasticity and strength." Hourani, *Arab Seafaring* p. 90.

¹⁴¹ Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 1, p. 163; Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥlat*, p. 56; Idrīsī, *Nuzhat al-Mushtāq*, vol. 1, p. 94; Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, *Riḥlat*, vol. 1, p. 289; Hourani, *Arab Seafaring*, p. 91.

¹⁴² Jāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān*, vol. 2, p. 303 : "أول من أستخلى السفن المقيمة المسمرة غير الخرزة"

long as they grew soft and weak. Hence, the planks were joined with fibre and besmeared with grease and pitch.¹⁴³ As for Ibn Jubayr, al-Idrīsī, and Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, they see the advantage of the sewn hull compared with nailed timbers in the fact that the former was more flexible and less breakable if vessels ran onto coral reefs in the Red Sea or elsewhere.¹⁴⁴

After the hull of the ship had been put together, it had to be protected from the inroads of the sea. Generally, the Arabic sources indicate that cracks, holes, and seams were blocked with a mixture of pitch (*qār*) or resin (*ratīnaj*) and fish oil. In addition, to prevent water from leaking into the ship, these substances also served to safeguard the bottom against the desolation of the shipworm. Coating in general was done with castor oil or fish oil, especially that of the shark, which is described by Ibn Jubayr as the best of all fish oils.¹⁴⁵ Usually, Arab warships were painted black and their sails were white.¹⁴⁶ Muslim warships in 'Abbāsīd times were still armed with the typical main weapon of the ancient warship, the ram (*lijām*), but it seems that this was no longer used as the prime weapon for sinking enemy ships. Instead, the aim was to inflict minor blows on them and thereby immobilize them before shooting at

¹⁴³Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 1, p. 163.

¹⁴⁴Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥlat*, vol. 1, p. 56; Idrīsī, *Nuzhat al-Mushtāq*, vol. 1, 94; Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, *Riḥlat*, vol. 1, pp. 289-90.

¹⁴⁵Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥlat*, vol. 1, p. 56.

¹⁴⁶Christides, "Byzantine Dromon", p. 118.

them with projectiles.¹⁴⁷ Similar to the land armies, some of the warships of the fleet were equipped with hurling machines. At first missiles used consisted simply of heavy stones or pieces of iron. Nevertheless, by the end of the first century of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate, the Muslim forces were able to use the much more destructive Greek fire or naphtha, which for decades, had been a weaponry monopolized by the Byzantines.¹⁴⁸ It seems though that the fire-missiles used at that time consisted simply of sulphur and naphtha with stones, the whole being wrapped around with tow and placed into the holder, where it was then set alight and hurled against the enemy.¹⁴⁹ Another possible form of fire-missiles used at that time was grenades. These were small earth-pots (*qarūrah*), filled with combustible substances, which were hurled at the enemy by hand or by catapult.¹⁵⁰ In a naval battle with the Byzantines near the shores of Sicily in 220/835, the Aghlabids used fire ships from which flammable substances were hurled at the enemy vessels. Similarly, at the

¹⁴⁷Christides, *Conquest*, p. 44. However, contrary to the assumption that the use of hurling engines in Muslim and Byzantine warships was marked by the abandonment of the ram in naval warfare, Ibn Mankalī (d. 778/1376) clearly indicates the use of the ram in Muslim warships in his time and explains the best ways of using it in naval warfare. Ibn Mankalī, *al-Adillah*, p. 247. For the assumption of the abandonment of the ram, see *El* ², s.v. "Naft".

¹⁴⁸About the year 54/673, a Syrian architect from Ba'labakk called Callinicus defected to Byzantium. According to the Byzantine sources, he brought with him the secret of a new incendiary weapon, which was successfully applied in the Arab siege of Constantinople in 674-8 as well as in 717-718. In Arab sources, the first indication of the use of Greek fire by Muslims comes during the siege of Heraclea in 190/806 by the 'Abbāsid Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd. For more on the history of Greek fire and its development, see J. R. Partington, *A History of Greek Fire and Gunpowder* (Cambridge, 1960); H. R. Ellis Davidson, "The Secret Weapon of Byzantium", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, vol. 66 (1973), pp. 61-74; Haldon & Byrne, "A Possible Solution to the Problem of Greek Fire", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, vol. 70 (1977), pp. 91-9; G. Lloyd, *Greek Science after Aristotle* (London, 1973); K. White, *Greek and Roman Technology* (London, 1984); V. Christides, *The Conquest of Crete by the Arabs*, (Athens, 1984); Ahmad & Hill, *Islamic Technology* (Cambridge, 1986); *El* ², s.v. "Naft."

¹⁴⁹Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, vol. 18, p. 253.

¹⁵⁰Haldon & Byrne, "A Possible Solution", p. 98; Christides, *Conquest*, p. 65.

siege of Salonika in 291/904, Muslim forces led by Leo of Tripoli used Greek fire against the defending forces.¹⁵¹

The use of Greek fire by the 'Abbāsid forces for the first time in the history of the Muslim army was marked by their invention and use of fire-proof mantles to protect their ships as well as their men from the enemy's fire weapon.¹⁵² Muslim writers on warfare practice in later times such as Ibn al-'Amrī and Ibn Mankalī give details of the way a protective mantle should be made and the substances used in making such anti-fire garments. Amongst the main substances mentioned are: vinegar (*khall*), alum (*shabb*), myrrh (*murr*), borax (*bawraq*), albumen (*bayāḍ al-bayḍah*), and, most important of all, hollyhock (*khatmī*), which is described as being incredibly resistant to fire.¹⁵³

No details survive about the naval tactics that the Muslims adopted, but one can picture, in general, the typical tactics used in naval warfare between Muslims and Byzantines based on the naval weapons used by each side as well as from scattered information obtained from Muslim and Byzantine sources of later periods. After the famous naval battle of *Dhāt al-Ṣawārī* in 34/655, neither Muslim nor Byzantine sources record any large-scale naval engagement between the two opponents. There may have been two particular reasons for this. First, the numbers of warships involved in naval battles between the two sides were not many. Consequently, the

¹⁵¹ Archibald, *Naval Power*, p. 156; Visiliev, *Byzance*, vol. 1, p. 132; Haldon & Byrne, "A Possible Solution", p. 98.

¹⁵² Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, vol. 18, p. 274.

defeat of one side did not inevitably lead to the collapse of the naval power of that side as happened to the Byzantines at *Dhāt al-Ṣawārī*, when they lost nearly all of the 1,000 warships they deployed in that conflict.¹⁵⁴ The second reason, emphasized by the Byzantine sources, is that the Byzantines' fleets, and most probably the Muslims' too, were trained to avoid as much as possible any direct confrontation with the enemy's fleet unless it was absolutely necessary or when victory was guaranteed.¹⁵⁵ This was in recognition of the fact that the manufacture of the warships was very expensive and that the replacement of crews was also extremely difficult.¹⁵⁶ The great care taken of warships is evident in their cautious immobilization during wintertime, when they would be pulled ashore to safeguard them from the high winds and storms of winter.¹⁵⁷ Naval engagements between Muslim and Byzantine fleets hardly ever took place on the deep, open water. Instead, they usually happened near the shores of ports and islands. Similar to the tactic used by their land forces, Muslims seemed to prefer to arrange their ships in rows (*ṣufūf*) or in a crescent (*hilāl*) formation. The actual fighting would usually start with arrows, stone missiles, heavy pieces of iron, and Greek fire being shot between the two sides. If no ship was destroyed in the first confrontation, then the ram would be used, and if this also failed then the two opponents would come very close and sometimes one side would try to grapple their ships to those of the enemy by

¹⁵³ Ibn al-'Anrī, *Kitāb al-Ḥīyal*, pp. 160-63; Ibn Mankalī, *al-Tadhīrāt*, p. 365.

¹⁵⁴ Mas'ūdī, *al-Tanbīh*, p. 158; Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ*, p. 189; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 4, p. 288; Ibn al-A'tham, *Futūḥ*, vol. 2, p. 354; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 3, p. 13; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 7, p. 157; *EF*², Suppl., s.v. "*Dhāt al-Ṣawārī*".

¹⁵⁵ Archibald, *Naval power*, p. 158; Christides, *Conquest*, p. 60.

¹⁵⁶ Dolley, "Naval Tactics", p. 325.

using chains with grappling-irons. At this stage planks would be cast between the two sides and the decks of their ships would thus act as the battlefield where the men of each side would fight with swords and daggers.¹⁵⁸

6.2.3 The Crew of the Warship and the Responsibilities of the Commander of the Fleet

While describing the different seas, their physical characteristics, navigation in them, and the marine life of each one, al-Mas'ūdī indicates that each warship of the Muslim fleet serving in the Mediterranean was manned by a crew whose grades and appellations differed according to the work that each person was entrusted with on the ship.¹⁵⁹ The greater part of the crews consisted of the *nawātī*, then the *ru'asā'*, and finally those who were entrusted with the command of the ships of war.¹⁶⁰ The *nawātī* (sing. *nūṭī*) were the sailors, a term which seems to be equivalent to the term *mallāḥūn*, which was most commonly used in Iraq and the Persian Gulf.¹⁶¹ In each warship the *nawātī* were under the direct command of a chief sailor, best known in Syria and North Africa as *qā'id al-nawātī*,¹⁶² whereas in Iraq and the Persian Gulf the term *ashtiyām* (pl. *ashātimah*) was applied to this person.¹⁶³ According to Ibn

¹⁵⁷ Bakrī, *al-Mughrib*, pp. 38; Ibn Qutaybah, *al-Imāmah*, pt. 2, p. 111.

¹⁵⁸ Christides, *Conquest*, p. 62.

¹⁵⁹ Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 1, p. 129.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ The term *nūṭī* "sailor" is a loan word from Greek *nauta*. While Ibn Manẓūr (*Lisān*, vol. 2, p. 101) says that *nūṭī* is a word commonly used in Syria to designate sailors, historians like al-Ṭabarī use the word *mallāḥūn* when they speak of sailors in Iraq.

¹⁶² Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, p. 254.

¹⁶³ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 307, 558.

Khaldūn, the duties of the *qā'id al-nawātī* included the care of weapons and the direction of the naval action.¹⁶⁴ Meanwhile, the *ra'īs* (pl. *ru'asā'*) was the captain who was in charge of the warship's course, whether propelled by wind or oars (*majādīf*), and its anchorage.¹⁶⁵

The terms *amīr al-baḥr*, *amīr al-mā'*, and *amīr al-raḥl* all appear to be synonymous as they mean the general in command of the fleet, terms from which the word "admiral" is derived.¹⁶⁶ Almost on the same level (though in a different element) with the governors of land provinces, the admiral or *amīr al-baḥr* enjoyed wide-ranging authority as well as responsibility. His responsibilities were not confined to commanding the naval forces in time of war but also extended to taking care of the administration, financing, and safety of the fleet and its fighting forces in peacetime. Details of these responsibilities are well illustrated in Qudāmah's book, *al-Kharāj*, through a letter of instruction directed by the 'Abbāsid Caliph to one of his admirals (*amīr al-thughūr al-baḥrī*). Among these were the following duties:

Recruiting of Men

Recruitment of men, whatever their ranks, was one of the main responsibilities of the admiral. None but the best soldiers were to be chosen to serve in the fleet – those of a high moral standard and great courage in the face of the enemy. Recruited naphtha-

¹⁶⁴ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, p. 254.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ Ameer, *Short History*, p. 443; Ḥasan, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 3, p. 473.

throwers, sailors, oarsmen, artisans, and workmen on the ship had to be from among persons who were highly skilled, patient, and qualified in carrying out any necessary repairs to the ship. With regard to his police officers, the admiral had to choose men who would uphold his sense of justice and his severe attitude towards suspects and vicious men.

Treatment of Men

The Caliph advised the commander to review his troops continually and remain in constant contact with his ships, in order to gain a thorough understanding of his men and their qualities. His men should be able to reach him easily to make complaints or express their needs. He himself had to be an example to his soldiers and to anyone who looked to him for guidance, encouraging them and correcting them in the best possible way. His justice had to be clear to all and he must be, lenient towards the obedient and severe towards the disobedient. He had to pay their allowances (*arzāq*) in full and without delay.

Construction and Anchorage of Ships

An important duty of the commander was the supervision of shipbuilding, ensuring that the best-quality timbers, irons, and tar were obtained along with the best oars, masts, and nails. He must inspect newly-built ships for good construction, ensuring that methods and tools were improved and highly qualified specialist craftsmen were chosen for the work. When in harbour the ships needed to be guarded and in the winter they must be drawn up on safe beaches to protect them from high winds. The commander had to appoint men whom he knew and trusted for their courage and

good advice to remain in charge of ships when they were in their ports of anchorage, so that no ship would leave harbour without his knowledge. The Caliph urged the commander to watch over the ships continually, ensuring they were in good repair and always prepared for use with equipment in complete readiness, including naphtha, ropes, and other materials.

Secret Services and Prevention of Leakage of Naval Information

It was the commander's responsibility to see that agents who gathered information about the enemy were trustworthy, capable of giving sound advice, and also religious and honest. They must be fully acquainted with the sea, its ports, little known areas, and hiding places, so that they might report truthfully to him and give accurate details of ship movements. If they met enemy ships that they could not deal with, they should know where they could hide successfully. The commander had to supervise distant outposts and naval bases in order to be fully informed about the staff in charge. He had to keep a vigilant watch for enemy agents, and each senior official he put in charge must know intimately the city where he was based and ensure that gatekeepers and guards did not permit anyone to enter the city until they knew all about him, whence he came, his features, his attitude of mind, and his intention.

Preventing information about naval warfare from being leaked was one of the major obligations of the commander of the fleet. He must see that enemies were prevented from getting hold of weapons or knowledge of naval tactics from Muslim territory, and that commercial traders did not carry information or goods to the enemy. Severe

punishment must be meted out to anyone discovered to be doing this so that he would be an example to others.¹⁶⁷

The Caliph concluded his instructions by admonishing his commander not to betray his trust and wishing him success and good guidance in the task assigned to him.

Maritime skills were one of those things that the Arabs at first lacked, as they were a desert people. With the exception of the fighting men, the Arabs relied from the early days of Islam and for many later centuries on the people of the conquered areas to man their fleet.¹⁶⁸ During the early 'Abbāsid period, the Copts of Egypt are reported to have continued the tradition of providing the Muslims with the warships needed for their fleet as well as crew members including sailors, oarsmen, and helmsmen. The recruitment of sailors, as recorded mainly in the papyri of Egypt, was managed in a very organized manner, using a method which seems to have been the same as that normally employed in the raising of taxes. Requisitions by the governor were addressed to the community, which collectively was responsible to recruit its share of sailors. The draftees, therefore, would come from various social classes of the population including shepherds, bath-men, and fullers. In practice, however, personal service was usually replaced by money compensation, by which a village or a draftee could pay the wages of a substitute. Thus, while the maritime expenses fell

¹⁶⁷Unfortunately, the author does not give any clue to the Caliph's name. Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, pp. 47-50.

upon the entire population of Egypt, the actual maritime duties seem to have been performed mainly by professionals.¹⁶⁹ In addition to sailors, Christian Copts in Egypt also provided the Muslim fleet with artisans, such as carpenters, caulkers, fullers, and skilled workmen. As with the sailors, the artisans were also raised by means of conscription. In this regard, Bishop Severus Ibn al-Muqaffa' complained that, unlike the situation under the Umayyads, during the reign of the 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Manṣūr the monks in Egypt, although not compelled to pay any sum of money for the fleet, were instead required to carry out the tasks allotted to them daily in the shipbuilding yards of Miṣr.¹⁷⁰

Summary

Regarding the 'Abbāsīds naval power in the Mediterranean, they showed a distinct disinterest in extending Muslim influence across those waters and merely viewed the Syrian and African coasts as a bastion against Byzantine attack. Naval operations in the Mediterranean were actually imposed on the 'Abbāsīds rather than the result of their own military initiative and successive Caliphs (Abū al-'Abbās and al-Manṣūr) were drawn into conflicts and necessary fortification works in the coastal regions.

¹⁶⁸In this regard Ibn Khaldūn (*Muqaddimah*, p. 253) says "When the Arabs established their authority and became the dominant power... men of different races (*umam*) offered their services to them and they employed boatmen and sailors to help them improve their maritime knowledge and activities." In the naval battle of *Dhāt al-Ṣawārī* in 34/655, it is reported that there were only two Muslims on board one of the ships while all the others were Copts. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 4, p. 29; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 3, p. 14; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 7, p. 158.

¹⁶⁹Fahmy, *Sea-power*, pp. 98-102.

¹⁷⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 106-7.

The defence of the Muslim coasts depended on a system of servicemen from inland regions being stationed in the coastal towns during summer, while in winter these points were manned by small companies of garrisoned troops (*murābiṭūn*).

The people of Cyprus presented a particular problem to the 'Abbāsīds on account of their support for the Byzantines, provoking an attack against the island by the 'Abbāsīd Syrian fleet in 146/763, but it was another ten years before the 'Abbāsīds felt the need to launch a second naval attack in the Mediterranean, this time against the southern coast of Asia Minor. The later naval campaigns during the reigns of al-Mahdī, al-Rashīd, and al-Ma'mūn indicate a continued concern with Byzantine foes in Cyprus and Crete, and, under the last of these Caliphs, Crete and Sicily were taken by the Muslims, albeit by independent Muslim forces from Ifrīqiya and Andalusia.

In the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, the 'Abbāsīds' fleet remained weak during the early years of their caliphate, their chief problem being the piratic attacks of the Mayd and occasionally the Kurk peoples from the region of Sind. Decisive measures were taken against them by Caliph al-Manṣūr, less however by naval successes than by his affirmation of 'Abbāsīd authority in Sind. Nevertheless, there was a resurgence of hostilities from Sindī groups such as the *Ẓuṭṭ* in the time of Caliph al-Mahdī, when 'Abbāsīd governors in Sind were preoccupied in dealing with tribal struggles between Qaysīte and Yamanīte Arab settlers in the region, and a major military expedition had to be launched to suppress the rebellion. The same pattern of events recurred during the caliphate of al-Rashīd, initiated by the inter-tribal feuding

among the Arabs of Sind about 171/788, but this time it was an enhanced 'Abbāsīd fleet in the Gulf, rather than capable governors in Sind, that brought the situation under control. During the civil war between the two brothers al-Ma'mūn and al-Amīn, opportunity was once more taken by pirates to pursue their activities in the Gulf, which was made worse by a renewed rebellion of the Ḍuḡl, leading eventually to a shift of the trade centre from the port of al-Uḡllāh, near Baṣrah, to the more secure harbour of Sīrāf, near Shīrāz. Under al-Ma'mūn and al-Mu'taṣim, however, the 'Abbāsīds managed to re-establish their authority in the Persian Gulf, although the problem posed by Sind-based pirates continued to the end of the first century of the 'Abbāsīd rule.

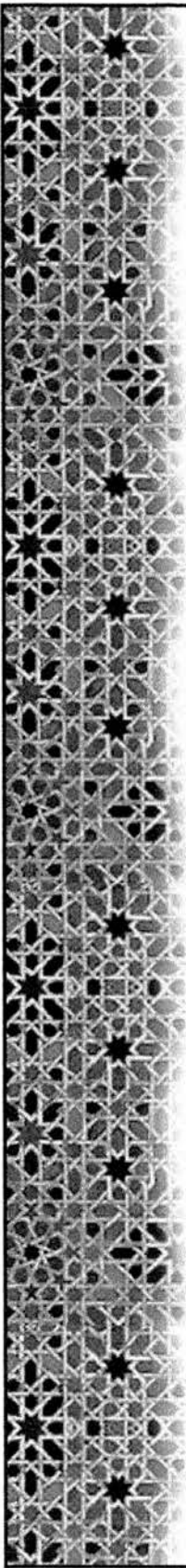
Moving beyond an early system of coastal defence in the Mediterranean against the Byzantine threat, the Muslims in Syria and Egypt constructed naval bases and dockyards to accommodate their augmented fleets. The earliest of these were at Qulzum and Alexandria. Other 'Abbāsīd naval bases, with varying histories and importance (most constructed earlier by the Umayyads) were at Rosetta, Damietta, and Tinnīs in Egypt; Barqah and Tūnis in North Africa; Acre and Tyre (both, like some others, fitted with defensive chains across the entrances to their harbours), Lādhiqīyah, Ṣaydā, Beirut, and Ṭarābulus al-Shām on the Syrian coast; Ṭarsūs on the coast of Asia Minor; and Baṣrah and al-Uḡllāh in Iraq.

Among the warships employed by the 'Abbāsīds, it is possible to describe, as far as evidence is available, the types and functions of different vessels, including the

bārijah, *shīnī*, *shalandī*, *ṭarīdah*, and *qarqūr*, all of which could be used on the open seas. There were, in addition, certain vessels used as river craft by the 'Abbāsid military, which included the *shadhā*, *sumayrī*, *ḥarrāqah*, and *ṭayyārah*. With regard to the various stages of and the materials used in shipbuilding, different types of timber were required for different parts of the ship (hull, masts, keel, planking, and oars) and these had to be supplied from trees that were locally available either in Egypt, Syria, or the lands bordering the Persian Gulf. Concerning the techniques of ship-construction, certain advantages were obtained by the stitched, rather than by the nailed, hull, and details have been included on the methods used for waterproofing and the weapons carried on board (including Greek fire).

In view of the high cost of replacing warships and crews, naval battles between Muslims and Byzantines were avoided as far as was possible, but when they did come into conflict, the tactics employed resembled in several ways those that were used by land armies.

The final part of the chapter contains a discussion of the different ranks, who formed the crew of the warship and the terms used to identify them. In addition, the various duties of the commander of the fleet, as described in a caliphal letter preserved in Qudamah's *Kitāb al-Kharāj*, are detailed. Note is finally taken of the extent to which the early Muslim fleet depended on the expertise of the Christian Copts of Egypt.



Chapter 7

'Abbāsiḍ Military Bases

Introduction

The motives of city building in ancient and modern times differ from one to another. In general terms, cities are built for administrative, military, commercial, or recreational purposes. Although it is possible for some cities to combine more than one of these characteristics at the same time, perhaps being administrative and military or commercial and recreational, yet each characteristic requires specific qualifications to be viewed as a genuine representative of the type. This chapter attempts to shed light on the 'Abbāsīds' military bases and their most distinctive martial characteristics.

7.1 'Abbāsīd Capital Cities

Unlike the early Islamic cities (*amṣār*) such as Kūfah, Baṣrah, Fuṣṭāṭ, and Qayrawān, which were built in the early days of Islam and the Umayyad Caliphate initially as garrison towns for the conquering forces,¹ the 'Abbāsīd capitals were strategic cities from the very outset of their establishment. That is to say that, in addition to being the seat of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs and the main administrative centres for the whole empire, the 'Abbāsīd capitals also served from the beginning as military bases. This fact is evidenced by the careful choice of their locations, the fortress nature of their structure, and the settlement of the army in and outside their perimeters.

One of the most important priorities for the 'Abbāsids, having succeeded in their revolution, was to search for the best capital city for their new-born state, one that would serve not only as the seat of their authority, but also as a garrison for their revolutionary forces. From the 'Abbāsids' military perspective, the city of Damascus, the Umayyads' capital, did not possess the advantages that would make it eligible as their own capital. This was not only because Damascus was the heartland of Umayyad support, but also because it was situated in a province sharing long land and sea borders with the Byzantines, thus making it strategically under perpetual risk of attack.² Equally, neither did any of the cities of Arabia, Egypt, or Khurāsān meet the needs of the 'Abbāsids in their quest for an effective administrative and military capital. While Arabia lacked human and natural resources, Egypt and Khurāsān were located at the fringes of the Islamic Empire, thus, from a military perspective, making it difficult to deploy troops swiftly and sufficiently from there to other parts of the state should a revolt break out.³ Having assessed all options in detail, the 'Abbāsids subsequently found Iraq to be the object of their long-cherished wish. Besides being the traditional hotbed of opposition to the Umayyads and a stronghold of support for the right of the house of the Prophet to rule, it was also rich in natural resources. Moreover, the easy accessibility it afforded to key provinces also placed it

¹Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 338-350; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 4, pp. 44-5. For some details on the establishment of the Muslim garrison towns during the early days of Islam, see N. al-Sayyad, *Cities and Caliphs*, pp. 43-76; *El*², s.v. "Miṣr".

²Al-'Alī, *Baghdād*, vol. 1, p. 21.

³Shākir, *Banī al-'Abbās*, vol. 1, p. 321.

advantageously above other regions.⁴ However, it was not easy for the 'Abbāsids to decide on the most convenient place within Iraq itself. Although Abū al-'Abbās was proclaimed Caliph in Kūfah, he never thought of or regarded the city as his permanent seat of authority. He knew quite well that making Kūfah, with its pro-'Alid sympathies, the seat of his government would involve great risk. Although the city was a suitable place for spreading the 'Abbāsīd propaganda during its secretive phase, it ceased to be so once the dynasty had been declared and its true objectives had come to light, namely the exclusion of the 'Alid family from the right to rule.

Thus, Caliph Abū al-'Abbās, feeling insecure there, decided to abandon Kūfah and chose instead to position himself and his Khurāsānī troops in a camp that had been set up by Abū Salamah in Ḥamām A'yan, sited approximately three farsakhs (11 miles) away from Kūfah.⁵ Having resided there for only a few months, the Caliph left Ḥamām A'yan for Ḥīrat al-Kūfah region. There, along the Euphrates, he founded a new capital for himself and his troops on the very site where the last Umayyad governor of Iraq, Yazīd b. Hubayrah, had begun to build a new city, only to abandon the project on the order of Caliph Marwān.⁶ Caliph Abū al-'Abbās named his new residence al-Hāshimīyah, but the people persisted in calling it by its former name, Madīnat Ibn Hubayrah. This persistence caused the Caliph to change his mind before the city was ever completed and to build a new Hāshimīyah directly

⁴Lassner, *Shaping*, p. 143; Kennedy, *'Abbāsīd Caliphate*, p. 87.

⁵Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 418-9, 429, 431; Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 123; Akhbār, p. 388; Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, p. 253; Lassner, *Shaping*, p. 146.

opposite the site of his first choice.⁷ Yet again, the caliph did not stay long in his new capital, as, in 134/752, he moved to al-Anbār region, where he founded a new capital on the east bank of the Euphrates, some ten farsakhs west of Baghdad.⁸ In his new capital, which he once again named al-Hāshimīyah, Caliph Abū al-'Abbās settled with his Khurāsānī troops, whose commanders received plots of land for building in the area surrounding the Caliph's palace.⁹

Upon succeeding his brother as Caliph in 136/754, al-Manṣūr continued to stay in the city,¹⁰ though not for a long. For reasons that remain unknown, he returned to the former capital in Ḥīrat al-Kūfah in 137/755.¹¹ No sooner, however, had he taken up position there, than it became clear to al-Manṣūr that the Hāshimīyah of Kūfah was not the best option for situating his seat and his troops. Besides its neighbouring Kūfah, with the danger that pro-'Alid elements there might influence the Khurāsānī troops, the city's lack of security arrangements proved also to be a source of danger during the mutiny of the Rāwandīyah in 141/759, when al-Manṣūr almost lost his

⁶Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 351; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 4, p. 365.

⁷Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 351; Lassner, *Shaping*, p. 153; Dūrī, *al-'Aṣr al-'Abbāsī*, p. 52.

⁸Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 464; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 358; *idem*, *Buldān*, p. 10; Dīnawarī, *Akḥbār*, p. 357; Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 155; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 351; Mas'ūdī, *Tanbīh*, p. 339. According to al-Balādhurī (*Ansāb*, vol. 2, p. 150), the transference of the Caliph's residence from Ḥīrat al-Kūfah to al-Anbār is said to have been suggested by Abū Muslim, who reminded the Caliph of the close proximity of Kūfah and its pro-'Alid sympathies to his seat.

⁹Dīnawarī, *Akḥbār*, pp. 375, 378; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 358.

¹⁰Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 379, 480, 483-4.

¹¹Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 351; Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 10.

life.¹² The combination of these factors eventually convinced al-Manṣūr of the need to search for a location in which to build a fortified city that would serve both as a seat of authority and as a garrison for his troops.¹³ Nevertheless, it took four years before Caliph al-Manṣūr finally chose the site of Baghdad and started the actual process of building in 145/763.

Besides the economic, commercial and climatic advantages of Baghdad, which have been discussed at length in sources speaking of the establishment of the city, the most important military characteristics of Baghdad can be summarized in two key points: location and fortification.

The location chosen by the 'Abbāsīd Caliph as his capital was very important as it was right in the middle of Iraq, halfway between major Iraqi cities – Kūfah, Baṣrah, Wāsiṭ, Mawṣil, and Sawād. It was also the meeting point of land and water routes.¹⁴ Hence, strategically, it was feasible for the 'Abbāsīd authorities to deploy their central troops in all directions, in Iraq or to other areas of the empire, efficiently and swiftly. Moreover, the location of Baghdad on the west bank of the Tigris, in the area where the two great rivers (Tigris and Euphrates) come close together, and the presence of many tributary canals, provided an excellent means of defence for the city against any external attack.¹⁵ The two great rivers – Tigris to the east, Euphrates

¹²Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 614-5; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 165; Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 3, p. 312.

¹³Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 614.

¹⁴Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 373; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 617.

¹⁵Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 617.

to the west – formed a defence line for the capital. An invading army from the west or the east would find it extremely difficult to cross those rivers when the bridges were cut off. At the same time it would be easy for the 'Abbāsīd army to foil any attempt by an invading army to construct a crossing.¹⁶

The fact that the military consideration was the most important reason for founding Baghdad was reflected in its lack of any luxury buildings or recreational establishments such as theatres, gymnasia, or gardens.¹⁷ Instead of recreational facilities, attention was paid to providing the city with an elaborate defence system, made up of a trench, walls, and gates. The trench (*khandaq*) measured 60 feet in width and acted as a water barrier. It encircled the city's outer wall and took its water from a feeder channel flowing from the Karkhāyā canal, a tributary of the Euphrates.¹⁸ In order to prevent water from the trench escaping towards the wall's base, a quay (*musannāh*) made of burnt brick (*ājurr*) and quicklime (*ṣārīj*) was built on the side of the trench adjacent to the wall.¹⁹ The function of the trench was to prevent invasion forces from reaching the outer wall, a defence technique known to the Arabs since pre-Islamic times.²⁰

¹⁶Lassner, *Shaping*, p. 185.

¹⁷Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh*, vol. 1, p. 87; al-'Alī, "The Founding of Baghdād", p. 93. It seems that the first recreational facility to be founded in Baghdad was the hippodrome, which was established in the time of Caliph al-Hādī, 30 years after the founding of the city.

¹⁸Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 12; Lassner, *Shaping*, p. 199.

¹⁹Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 12; Lassner, *Shaping*, p. 199; al-'Alī, *Baghdād*, vol. 1, pp. 296-7.

²⁰*EI*², s.v. "Khandak".

In addition to the trench, the city was also protected by two walls separated by an *intervallum* (*faṣīl*).²¹ The outer wall, which was shorter and thinner than the inner wall, seems unlikely to have been the main defence line, for the methods used to defend the Round City reveal that the inner wall, which is described as “the great” (*al-a‘ẓam*), was the one relied on as a means of additional defence.²² As an additional defensive arrangement, the inner wall was provided with many projecting towers (*shurafāt*)²³ whereby troops could position themselves to monitor and shower the assailants with arrows and other projectiles such as rocks and iron balls.

The walls were pierced by four massive iron double gates, each of which was guarded by a force of 1,000 men and named after the province or the main city to which it led: Khurāsān Gate, al-Shām Gate, Kūfah Gate, and Baṣrah Gate.²⁴ Among the most distinguishing features of the city’s gates was an important architectural motif known as *azwirār* or “the bent entrance”.²⁵ This feature is such that anyone approaching the city from the outside gate could not enter it directly, as he had to turn left into a corridor leading to the second gate.²⁶ This style of entrance offered means of concealment as part of an elaborate military defence technique. It is suggested that this bent entrance with a corridor tilting to the left would have

²¹Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh*, vol. 1, p. 73; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 651; al-‘Alī, *Baghdād*, vol. 1, p. 298.

²²Ya‘qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 12; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 651. For some observations on the dimensions of the walls, see Lassner, *Shaping*, p. 288, n. 3; al-‘Alī, *Baghdād*, vol. 1, p. 299.

²³Ya‘qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 12; Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh*, vol. 1, p. 74.

²⁴Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh*, vol. 1, pp. 76-7; Ya‘qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 11; *idem*, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 373.

²⁵Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, vol. 3, p. 156.

²⁶Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh*, vol. 1, p. 74; Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam*, vol. 3, p. 156.

compelled assailants, after entering the first gate, to turn left, thereby exposing their right sides, which were not covered by shields since the common practice was for soldiers to hold their shields with their left hands and their swords or spears with their right hand, which would then be targets for the arrows of defenders firing from the top of the inner wall.²⁷

As might be expected of a city intended to be both an administrative centre and a military base, the settlement of the army in Baghdad was carried out according to a very careful plan. After completing the construction of Baghdad, which some of the military commanders were detailed to take part in supervising the construction work,²⁸ the Khurāsānī troops, as individuals and groups, were allotted fiefs (*qaṭā'i*, sing. *qaṭī'ah*) within and outside the city walls. Apart from his close *mawālī* and advisers, Caliph al-Manṣūr only allotted lands for building within the walls of the city to his most trustworthy commanders and their men.²⁹ A particularly privileged part of them the Marwarrūdhīyah, who resided in the quarter located between the gates of Baṣrah and Khurāsān.³⁰ Regarding the lands outside the walls of the city, although the fiefs of the Khurāsānīs were scattered all over the outskirts of the city, a large proportion of them seem to have been concentrated more on the north and the north-west, especially in and around the vast area known as al-Ḥarbīyah suburb

²⁷Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, vol. 2, pp. 23-5.

²⁸During the construction period, Baghdad was divided into four quarters (*arbā'*, sing. *rub'*), each of which was entrusted to a military commander (*qā'id*) with the mission to supervise the workers and urge them to finish the work. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 619, 651.

²⁹Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 14.

(*rabaḍ*).³¹ Nevertheless, unlike the common practice in the organization of the garrisons cities (*amṣār*) in early days of Islam and the Umayyad Caliphate, when the warriors were settled according to their tribes and clans, the Khurāsānīs settled in Baghdad according to their cities and districts of origin in Khurāsān and other eastern provinces.³² Thus, when the geographer-historian al-Ya'qūbī names, for example, the people (*ahl*) who settled in the suburb of al-Ḥarbīyah, he points out that they were from the people of Balkh, Marw, Khuttal, Bukhārā, Khwārizm, Kābūl Shāh, Asbīshāb, and Istākhnaj.³³ Each of these groups, he adds, was under the command of an army commander (*qā'id*) and a second officer called a chief (*ra'īs*),³⁴ whose responsibility seems to have been to look after the administrative and civil affairs of the soldiers in peace-time.³⁵

Although the careful planning and the security measures taken by Caliph al-Manṣūr in the establishment of Baghdad guaranteed him a capital that was impregnable against any outside threat, time however proved that they were not sufficient to ensure his personal security, especially when internal unrest broke out among his troops. This weakness became obvious in 151/768 when different factions of the

³⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 13-4. On the distinguished and extensive military role of the Marwarrūdhīyah in the early 'Abbāsīd period, see Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 462-3, 474, 498, 509; vol. 8, pp. 29, 142, 530.

³¹Ya'qūbī (*Buldān*, pp. 14-21) lists 60 fiefs outside the walls of the city, 40 of them situated on the north and north-west, the remainder located on the other sides of the city. For a more in-depth study on the settlement pattern of Baghdad during its early period, see Lassner, *Shaping*, pp. 208-17; al-'Alī, *Baghdād*, vol. 1, pp. 134-172.

³²Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, pp. 15, 18.

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 20.

army mutinied against the Caliph for unspecified reasons. This led the Caliph to take the decision not only to foster rivalry between the different factions of his army but also to break their unity by separating them into two detachments. Thus, while a part of the army remained in Baghdad on the west bank of the Tigris, the other faction was moved to encamp with his son and heir apparent, al-Mahdī, on the east bank just opposite the Round City in an area originally known as 'Askar al-Mahdī and later as al-Ruṣāfah.³⁶ By creating these two military centres, the Caliph could now use one detachment against the other. Should an insurrection break out on the left bank of the river, the Caliph would still have access to military support and provision on the opposite bank; the reverse would of course be true for the right bank.³⁷

Al-Ruṣāfah, which grew fast and became a part of Baghdad soon after its founding, was protected by a trench and wall and connected to the west bank of the Tigris by four pontoon bridges, two of which were installed for the exclusive use of the Caliph and his household.³⁸

Before completing the construction work on al-Ruṣāfah in 159/776, Caliph al-Manṣūr also founded in 155/772 another garrison city, called al-Rāfiqah, on the left bank of the middle Euphrates at about 300 ells' distance (200 m.) west of the old city

³⁵ Al-ʿAlī, *Baghdad*, vol. 1, p. 160; Lassner, *Shaping*, p. 213.

³⁶ Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 361; Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh*, vol. 1, p. 83; Masʿūdī, *Tanbīh*, p. 360; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 37.

³⁷ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 37; Lassner, "Ruṣāfah", p. 97; *ibid.*, *Shaping*, p. 205; Sayyad, *Cities and Caliphs*, p. 130; Omar, *ʿAbbāsiyyāt*, p. 109.

³⁸ Lassner, "Ruṣāfah," p. 97.

of al-Raqqah in northern Mesopotamia.³⁹ Planned by Mu'āwiyah b. Ṣālīḥ and Mu'ādh b. Muslim,⁴⁰ al-Rāfiqah was built after the model of Baghdad.⁴¹ It was a Round City with a defence system consisting of double walls supported by 132 projecting towers and a moat on the outside.⁴² Moreover, like Baghdad and al-Ruṣāfah, al-Rāfiqah was founded with the purpose of garrisoning a considerable number of Khurāsānī troops whose main duty was to reinforce the Byzantine frontier and to keep a close eye on the Arab tribes in Jazīrah and Syria.⁴³ Al-Rāfiqah, which lost its name in course of time and took instead the name of the old city al-Raqqah, reached its apogee under Caliph al-Rashīd, who adopted it as his permanent residence from 180/796 until his death in 193/809.⁴⁴

Although within the first 50 years of its establishment Baghdad had lost its position as the seat of authority to other cities such as al-Rāfiqah or Marw in Khurāsān, throughout that period it nevertheless remained the main base of the 'Abbāsīd central army. This situation continued unchanged until 221/836, when Caliph al-Mu'taṣim laid the foundation of Sāmarrā'. All sources speaking of Sāmarrā' unanimously report that the main reason for the founding of the city was closely connected to al-Mu'taṣim's policy of large-scale introduction of Central Asian troops (so-called

³⁹Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 44; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 213; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 370; Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 224; *EI*², s.v. "al-Rakka".

⁴⁰Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 224.

⁴¹Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 213; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, p. 315.

⁴²*EI*², s.v. "al-Rakka"; Le Strange, *Lands*, pp. 101-2.

⁴³Kennedy, *'Abbāsīd Caliphate*, p. 90; Dūrī, *al-'Aṣr al-'Abbāsī*, p. 74; Omar, *'Abbāsīyyāt*, p. 106.

Turks) into the central army in Baghdad. This policy eventually provoked a deep resentment amongst all elements of Baghdad's population. It seems that, the streets and suburbs of Baghdad were becoming cramped by the new soldiers, whose number at the time is estimated by some sources, most likely with a sense of exaggeration, to have been 70,000.⁴⁵ What tended to worsen the situation was the unruly behaviour of the Turks, who used to gallop on their horses through the streets of Baghdad, hitting men and women and trampling children under foot.⁴⁶ Behaviour of this kind on the part of the Turks enraged the people of Baghdad, who would on many occasions pull them from their saddles, beating some and killing others, without the authorities' being able to learn who had killed them.⁴⁷ The feeling of resentment against the Turks and al-Mu'taṣim, who brought them, was not limited to the general populace of Baghdad, but was shared by the old Baghdādī troops from among the Abnā, who deeply resented the clear preference of al-Mu'taṣim for his Turkish troops at their expense.⁴⁸ All these reasons were enough ultimately to convince al-Mu'taṣim of the scale of danger this set for his personal safety and the safety of his Turkish troops on

⁴⁴Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 266; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 213; Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, p. 390.

⁴⁵Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 3, p. 173; Nizām al-Mulk, *Siyāsatnāmah*, p. 85; Qazwīnī, *Āthār al-Bilād*, pp. 318, 385; Ibn Ṭiḡtaqā, *Fakhrī*, p. 210.

⁴⁶Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 18; Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 27; Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 4, p. 53; *idem*, *Tanbih*, p. 356; K. al-'Uyūn, p. 487.

⁴⁷Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 18; Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 27.

⁴⁸Ibn Ṭiḡtaqā, *Fakhrī*, p. 211; Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 4, p. 53; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 17.

whom his authority rested. Thus, al-Mu'taṣim decided that the best solution was to find another seat for the Caliphate and for his troops.⁴⁹

Like his predecessors, al-Mu'taṣim tried several locations near Baghdad before finally settling on the site of Sāmarrā', which was about 125 km. north of Baghdad, on the east bank of the Tigris.⁵⁰ Unlike Baghdad, which was protected by an elaborate defence system comprising walls and trenches, Sāmarrā' lacked any such kinds of defence arrangements.⁵¹ The most important aspect in connection with the establishment of Sāmarrā' is the segregation policy that had been adopted by Caliph al-Mu'taṣim in settling the different military groups of his army. The various military groups were separated from one another, but in the siting of their respective quarters the proximity of their original homeland was taken into consideration.⁵² Thus, the Turkish troops were settled in quarters near the troops from Farghānah and Ushrūsanah.⁵³ These troops, on the other hand, were kept apart not only from the local populace but also from the Khurāsānīs, who settled, along with the common people, on both sides of the main street of the city.⁵⁴ In order to discourage any interaction between the Turkish troops and other sections of the population, the Turkish neighbourhoods were provided with their own shops, bath-houses, markets,

⁴⁹Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. pp. 17-8; Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 4, p. 54; Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 27; Ibn Ṭīqtaqā, *Fakhrī*, p. 210; Ismail, "Sāmarrā'", p. 4; Rogers, "Sāmarrā'", pp. 128-9.

⁵⁰*EI*², s.v. "Sāmarrā'".

⁵¹Dūrī, *al-'Aṣr al-'Abbāsī*, p. 199; Ismail, "Sāmarrā'", p. 7.

⁵²Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 4, p. 55.

⁵³Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 29; Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 4, p. 55.

and mosques.⁵⁵ Moreover, to preserve the ethnic purity as well as the military spirit among his Turkish troops, the Caliph went further in his segregation policy by forbidding his Turkish troops to marry anybody who was not from their own ethnic stock.⁵⁶ For this purpose al-Mu'taṣim sought to purchase female Turkish slaves and have them married to his Turkish troops, so that their offspring would in turn intermarry (exclusively) amongst themselves.⁵⁷ Al-Mu'taṣim took yet another step in his social programme related to his Turkish troops in Sāmarrā' by entering the names of the slave women assigned to his Turkish troops in the registers (*dawāwīn*) and giving them fixed allowances (*arzāq qā'imah*), thereby making it impossible for their husbands to divorce or abandon these wives.⁵⁸

While the establishment of the 'Abbāsīd garrison-capitals in Iraq led to complete demilitarization of the old Iraqi cities such as Kūfah, Baṣrah, and Wāsiṭ, nearly all the *amṣār* in other regions continued to retain their prime roles as military garrisons in addition to their administrative one. Nevertheless, in the time of the 'Abbāsīds their military roles were no longer to house the troops who would wage the *jihād* and expand the state borders, but rather to maintain order and occasionally to take part in

⁵⁴ Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 29.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*; Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 4, p. 55.

⁵⁸ Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 29; Ismail, "Sāmarrā'", p. 8; Ayalon, "Reform", pp. 32-3. For further discussion of the motives as well as the social, political, and cultural impact of al-Mu'taṣim's segregation policy used toward his Turkish troops in Sāmarrā', see G. M. Spalckhaver, *The Breaking of a Thousand Swords: A History of the Turkish Community of Sāmarrā' (218-264/ 833-877)*, Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University, 1993, pp. 310-34.

the collecting of local taxes.⁵⁹ Among the many *amṣār* that are frequently mentioned during the early 'Abbāsīd time and which housed companies of troops were Mawṣil, Qayrawān, Tūnis, Ṭubnah, Fustāt, Marw, Rayy, and al-Manṣūrah in Sind. The number of troops stationed in these various *amṣār* varied from one city to another and from one time to another, depending inevitably on the extent of the threat in each region. In some regions such as Ifrīqiyah where there were many Khārijites, Berbers, etc., who always sought to establish their own authority in the region, there was always a need for a large number of troops, whose number in some years reached as many as 40,000 as in the case of the Khurāsānīs in Qayrawān.⁶⁰ Meanwhile, in other, less troublesome areas such as Mawṣil, control only required between 2,000 and 4,000 locally recruited militia men to be stationed in the city to handle the frequent raids conducted by small Khārijite forces against the city and the cultivated areas.⁶¹

Apart from these old garrison towns, situations sometime required that the 'Abbāsīd authority build new, limited-size garrison towns to handle new threats that previously did not exist. For example, in the district of Hamḍān, in Jibal province, the 'Abbāsīd authority under Caliph al-Mahdī was driven to build a well-fortified garrison town in Sīsar. Its mission was to counter the highwaymen who were spread abroad in the mountainous areas, causing a major threat to the traffic routes as well as to the

⁵⁹Kennedy, "Central Government", p. 30.

⁶⁰Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 639.

Caliph's livestock that grazed in the area. During the reign of Caliph al-Rashīd, Sīsar was laid waste at the hands of the highwaymen, whose number had increased considerably over time. Nevertheless, by the order of the Caliph, Sīsar was soon rebuilt and garrisoned this time by 1,000 militia-men who were recruited locally.⁶²

7.2 Frontier Strongholds

Other than the military bases in the heartland of their empires, the 'Abbāsīds also possessed an inclusive system of strongholds, packed with troops, stretching all along their land frontiers. Special attention, however, was paid to those situated along the northern and north-eastern borderlines with the Byzantines and the Khazars, who represented the most serious remaining outer threats to the sovereignty of the Islamic state at that time. Regarding the northern frontier with Byzantium, the Muslim armies' conquest of Syria and Mesopotamia around 20/641 and their persistent offensive against Armenia compelled the Byzantine armies to withdraw from these regions into Asia Minor.⁶³ In order to protect the heartland of Asia Minor from the advances of the Muslim armies, the Byzantines initially relied on a complex two-phase defence system. First, by destroying all the strongholds, towns, and villages in the Cilician plain and deporting all of their inhabitants into the Byzantine hinterland in Asia Minor. By this, the Byzantines aimed to create an empty buffer zone that would separate their lands in Asia Minor from the Muslim's newly gained

⁶¹Azdī, *Tārīkh*, pp. 177, 192, 267-9; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 632; Kennedy, "Central Government," p. 30.

⁶²Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 381.

⁶³*Ibid.*, p. 162; Bosworth, "The Byzantine Defence System", pp. 116-117.

territories in Syria. Thus, when the Muslim raiders entered the region, they would find virtually nothing apart from small groups of Byzantine forces who would wait for them and take the opportunity to launch ambushes against any Muslim troops who became separated from the main body of the army.⁶⁴ The second phase of the Byzantine defence system was reliance on the natural barrier presented by the elevated Taurus mountain range with its difficult terrain as well as the harsh winter climate of Asia Minor as means of halting the advance of the Muslims into Asia Minor.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, it was not long before the Byzantines realized the deficiency of their defence system, as the Muslims succeeded in 41/662 in crossing the mountainous passes of the Taurus and penetrating deep into the Byzantine territories in Asia Minor.⁶⁶ To produce a more effective defence system, the Byzantines had no other choice but to reorganize their defence system by introducing a fundamental reform into the administration of their regions in Asia Minor, so that they could achieve the best way of defending themselves against Muslim raids. The key element of the new Byzantine defence system was the redeployment of the troops withdrawn from Syria and Armenia, by settling them in the various strongholds and towns in the Asia Minor regions, especially those bordering Muslim lands. In their new settlements, each of the Byzantine military contingents was obliged in course of time to rely on local resources. Thus, gradually the military commanders in each city and area started to take responsibility for the civil administration of their areas, in addition to their military duties. This development was the nucleus of the

⁶⁴Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 194; Bosworth, "The Byzantine Defence System", p. 119.

⁶⁵Bosworth, "The Byzantine Defence System", p. 118.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, p. 120.

administrative-military system which gradually began to crystallize in the Byzantine frontier regions in Asia Minor and was known as the “*theme* system”.⁶⁷

The organizational effort that the Byzantines made along their borders, which finally provided them with a defence line able to contain the Muslim threat and counter any attempt made by the Muslims to establish a military presence in Asia Minor, was met in turn by the Muslims, who similarly developed a complex military system along their own frontiers. The Muslims’ system, known as the *thughūr* system, consisted of a long chain of fortresses and strongholds, stretching from Malatyah on the upper Euphrates to Ṭarsūs near the Mediterranean coast. This long line of strongholds was commonly divided into two groups: those guarding Mesopotamia (*thughūr al-Jazīrah*) to the north-west, and those guarding Syria (*thughūr al-Shām*) to the south-west.⁶⁸

Although the frontier system began in the early days of the Umayyad Caliphate, it became fully developed during the first 50 years of the ‘Abbāsid rule, reaching its optimum state by the end of al-Rashīd’s reign in 193/809. After the fall of the Umayyad Caliphate, the ‘Abbāsids inherited the problem of facing the Byzantine threat and the best means of protecting the frontiers of their state. The ‘Abbāsids first

⁶⁷The word “*theme*”, used in this context, originally meant a military contingent; it later signified the province or region where the military contingent was based and, consequently, the 29 provinces into which the Byzantine Empire was divided. (*ibid.*, pp. 118-121).

⁶⁸On the geographical division of the Muslim frontiers, see Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Masālik*, p. 252; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, pp. 186-7; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 194-203. On the historical geography of the Muslim frontier in Asia Minor, see W. Ramsay. *The Historical Geography of Asia Minor* (London, 1890), pp. 281 ff., 349-57.

tasted the bitterness of this problem in 133/750, when the Emperor Constantine V (*reg.* AD 741-775) seized the opportunity represented by the 'Abbāsids' preoccupation with consolidating their authority following the success of their revolution and launched a successful attack against the Muslims' northern frontier, destroying many of its strongholds, including those of Malatyah and Qālīqalā (Theodosiopolis or Erzurum).⁶⁹ Thereafter, the 'Abbāsids embarked on a concerted effort to establish and rebuild frontier strongholds and to garrison them with the necessary troops.

Within the framework of the Syrian frontier zone, Maṣṣīṣah (or Mopsuestia) was one of the earliest towns that the 'Abbāsids sought to fortify, as it was the key pass used by the Romans to penetrate into Anṭākiyah (Antioch).⁷⁰ Maṣṣīṣah itself was a town divided by the River Pyramos (or Jayḥān) into two parts, and was linked by a stone bridge. While the old Maṣṣīṣah was located on the right bank of the Pyramos, the suburb of the Kafarbayyā, which was established during the days of the 'Abbāsids, was situated on the right bank of the river.⁷¹ The Muslims first fortified the town of Maṣṣīṣah in 84/703 when 'Abd al-Malik's son 'Abdallāh managed to wrest the town from the Byzantines and to rebuild the citadel on its old foundations.⁷² In the following year 'Abdallāh is reported to have stationed a garrison in the town

⁶⁹Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 222-3, 236 ff.; Brooks, "Byzantines", pp. 731-2; Bosworth, "Byzantium", p. 56; Dūrī, *al-'Aṣr al-'Abbāsī*, pp. 73-4.

⁷⁰Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 196.

⁷¹Iṣṭakhrī, *Masālik*, p. 63; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 196-7; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 5, p. 145.

including 300 hand-picked soldiers and to have built a mosque on the citadel hill (*tall al-ḥiṣn*).⁷³ In addition to its permanent garrison forces, Maṣṣīṣah used to receive every year between 1,500 and 2,000 men of the advance troops (*tawāli'*) of Anṭākiyah, who would usually come and winter in the town before returning to their rear base in springtime.⁷⁴ Under the 'Abbāsids, Maṣṣīṣah received a great deal of attention. The first 'Abbāsīd Caliph, Abū al-'Abbās, strengthened the garrison by 400 men, to whom he allotted plots of land (*khiṭaṭ*) for building.⁷⁵ The garrison was further strengthened under Caliph al-Manṣūr, who, upon his accession, increased the garrison force in Maṣṣīṣah by another 400 men who also received plots of land.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, between the years 137/755 and 139/757, most probably on account of the recurrent incursions by the Byzantines and, in addition, the devastating earthquake which hit the town around the year 139/757, many of Maṣṣīṣah's inhabitants were forced to abandon the town.⁷⁷ Consequently, in 140/758, Caliph al-Manṣūr rebuilt the town, which he then renamed al-Ma'mūrah, and increased its garrison to 1,000 men. Additionally, as a means of boosting the population of the town, al-Manṣūr brought released prisoners (*ahl al-maḥābis*) and also specialist groups (*ahl al-khuṣūṣ*), consisting of Persians, Slaves (*Ṣaqālibah*), and Christian

⁷²Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 196; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 6, p. 385; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, p. 127; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 4, p. 398; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 387.

⁷³Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 195-6; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, p. 307.

⁷⁴Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 196; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, p. 308.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*

⁷⁶*Ibid.*

⁷⁷Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 197.

Nabataeans, and gave them plots of land for building within the walls of the town.⁷⁸ Under Caliph al-Mahdī, the garrison in Maṣṣīṣah was enhanced by an additional 2,000 levied troops (*farḍ*). Furthermore, Maṣṣīṣah continued to receive annually the *tawālī* corps from Anṭākiyah who used to winter in the town. This military practice continued unchanged until Sālim al-Baralusī became governor (*wālī*) and increased the garrison by 500 standing soldiers instead.⁷⁹

As for the suburb of Kafarbayyā, it is reported that Caliph al-Rashīd built it (or, according to another report, he only altered its plans after it had been originally built by Caliph al-Mahdī) and fortified it with a ditch. Kafarbayyā was also protected by a wall, the construction of which started in the time of al-Ma'mūn and stood completed after his death during the reign of Caliph al-Mu'taṣim.⁸⁰

To the west of Maṣṣīṣah, approximately 18 miles away on the right (western) bank of the River Sorus or Sayḥān, lies the frontier garrison town of Adhanah. This town, the ancient history of which can be traced back to the Lydian kingdom, was first populated by Muslims in 141/759, when Caliph al-Manṣūr rebuilt it and settled it with Muslim inhabitants brought from Damascus and Urdunn. It seems, however, that the town was laid waste sometime later as a result of a Byzantine incursion. Thus, the town is said to have been rebuilt again in 194/810 by the 'Abbāsīd Turkish

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 196-7; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 387; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 509; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, p. 308; Bosworth, "Byzantium", p. 57.

⁷⁹Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 197; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, p. 308.

commander Faraj al-Khādim, who then garrisoned it with Khurāsānī troops who received in return an increment above their normal pay.⁸¹ Because of its close proximity to the Byzantine lands, Adhanah was used on some occasions by the 'Abbāsīd forces as a base from which to launch their raids into the Byzantine territories.⁸² According to Muslim geographers, Adhanah was well protected, as its defensive system consisted of a trench and a wall with eight gates.⁸³

Among the other strongholds of the Syrian *thughūr* was 'Ayn Zarbah.⁸⁴ This town, located north of Maṣṣīṣah and renowned for its fertile land, was first rebuilt and fortified in 180/797 by Caliph al-Rashīd, who then garrisoned it with Khurāsānī troops who received in return plots of land for housing in the town.⁸⁵ In 190/806, the town was raided by the Byzantines, who initially managed to take captive many of its inhabitants before they had be rescued by the people of Maṣṣīṣah.⁸⁶ As a means of enhancing the military position of 'Ayn Zarbah against incursions of the Byzantines, 'Abdallāh b. Ṭāhir, the governor of the region between Raqqah and Egypt, sought to swell the number of its population by bringing and settling in the town people from

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 199; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, pp. 309-10; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 1, p. 133.

⁸² Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 625; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 496; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, pp. 466-7.

⁸³ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 1, p. 133; Ibn Shihnah, *Tārīkh Ḥalab*, p. 80.

⁸⁴ Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Masālik*, p. 100; Iṣṭakhrī, *Masālik*, p. 63; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, p. 311; Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 118; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 202.

⁸⁵ Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 202; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, p. 311.

⁸⁶ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 320; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 203; Khalīfah, *Tārīkh*, p. 376; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 343.

Egypt.⁸⁷ Likewise, in 220/835, Caliph al-Mu'taṣim brought into the town some of the 20,000 Zuṭṭ who have been captured after the failure of their rebellion in the marshlands of southern Iraq. In 'Ayn Zarbah, they were the objects of a Byzantine attack in the same year and another one in 241/856, during which they were captured along with their families and buffaloes and were taken to Constantinople.⁸⁸

The most important of the garrison towns of the Syrian frontier was Ṭarsūs, which, according to Muslim geographers, was the key point separating the Muslim and Christian worlds in Asia Minor.⁸⁹ Moreover, its very close proximity by sea and land to the Byzantine territories made it a unique and prime base from which the 'Abbāsids would launch their naval and land attacks against the Byzantine lands.⁹⁰

Ṭarsūs, which was divided by the River Bardān (or Cydnus) before it flowed into the sea six miles away,⁹¹ was first conquered by Muslim armies during the reign of Mu'āwiyah in 53/673 by Junādah b. Abī Ummayah al-Azdī.⁹² According to Muslim authors, al-Ḥasan b. Qaḥṭabah raided the Byzantine territories in 162/779 and, upon his return, he brought Caliph al-Mahdī a description of the ruined Ṭarsūs, which in his estimation could accommodate 100,000 inhabitants if it were rebuilt. Although Qaḥṭabah was able to persuade Caliph al-Mahdī of the great advantage of building,

⁸⁷Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, vol. 3, p. 60; Fiey, "The Syriac Population", p. 47.

⁸⁸Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 10, 201; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 16; Balādhurī, *Futuḥ*, p. 203; Miskawayh, *Tajārīb*, pp. 472-3.

⁸⁹Maqdisī, *Aḥsan al-Taqaṣīm*, pp. 14-5.

⁹⁰Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, p. 86.

⁹¹Mas'ūdī, *Tanbih*, p. 58; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 1, p. 553.

fortifying, and garrisoning Ṭarsūs to increase the power of Islam in order to overcome the enemy, yet the construction of the town itself took ten years before it actually started. It was not until 171/787, when Caliph al-Rashīd learned that the Byzantines intended to restore and fortify the town, that he ordered Harthamah b. A'yan to anticipate them and build it. Harthamah in his turn entrusted Faraj b. Sulaym al-Khādim with its construction, which was completed in 172/788. Ṭarsūs was then garrisoned by 3,000 Khurāsānī troops along with another 2,000 warriors who were brought from Maṣṣīṣah and Anṭākiyah with an increase of ten dinars over their usual pay.⁹³

Al-Hārūniyah and al-Kanīṣah al-Sawdā', lying in the hill country between 'Ayn Zarbah and Mar'ash, were also an integral part of the Syrian frontier strongholds and were both first built and garrisoned by Muslims in 'Abbāsīd times. Al-Hārūniyah, at a distance of one stage (*marḥalah*, sing. *marāḥil*) to the west of Mar'ash, owes its name to its founder, Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd, who built it in 183/799 and garrisoned it with regular troops (*muqātilah*), in addition to many other volunteers, who moved into the town to take part in the *jihād*.⁹⁴ According to Yāqūt, the town was fortified with double walls and iron gates.⁹⁵

⁹²Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 240.

⁹³Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 200-1; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, p. 310; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 410; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 4, p. 133; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 234.

⁹⁴Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 202; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 5, p. 388; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, p. 311.

⁹⁵Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 5, p. 388.

On the other hand, al-Kanīṣah al-Sawdā', or "the Black Church", was a very ancient Greek fortress built of black stones.⁹⁶ According to al-Balādhurī, the fortress was first built and very well fortified by Caliph al-Rashīd, who also garrisoned it with regular troops who received as a bonus an increase in their regular pay.⁹⁷

Although Muslim geographers do not include it as one of the Syrian frontier strongholds, Ṭuwānah, lying at the northern end of the pass of the Cilician Gates, was for some time the most advanced Muslim frontier stronghold on the north-west border with the Byzantines. Ṭuwānah was first conquered by Muslim armies in 88/707, during the days of Caliph al-Walīd b. 'Abd al-Malik, by Maslamah b. 'Abd al-Malik and al-'Abbās b. al-Walīd b. 'Abd al-Malik.⁹⁸ Thereafter, like the other frontier towns, Ṭuwānah was taken and retaken alternately by the Byzantines and the Muslims. In 'Abbāsid times, Ṭuwānah was first mentioned as being rebuilt and fortified in 218/833, when Caliph al-Ma'mūn entrusted his son al-'Abbās with its reconstruction.⁹⁹ The site of the town is reported to have occupied a square mile and to have been surrounded by a wall three farsakhs (18 km.) in circumference, with four gates, each of which had a fortified tower (*ḥiṣn*). The town was then garrisoned by more than 6,000 levied troops, who were drawn from the people of Damascus, Ḥimṣ, Urdunn, Filastīn, Egypt, Qinnasrīn, Jazīrah, and Baghdad. In return for their

⁹⁶Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 302; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 4, p. 485; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, p. 311.

⁹⁷Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 302.

⁹⁸Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 6, p. 434; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 190.

⁹⁹Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 631; Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 412; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 413.

service, these troops were paid 100 dirhams for each cavalryman and 40 for each infantryman.¹⁰⁰ Nonetheless, soon after the death of al-Ma'mūn late in 218/833, the new Caliph, al-Mu'taṣim, ordered the destruction of Ṭuwānah and the dismissal of its garrisoned troops.¹⁰¹

On the Mesopotamian frontier (*thughūr al-Jazīrah*) was the stronghold of Mar'ash (Germaniceia), which lies east of the River Jayḥān at the intersection of the roads that run to Anṭākiyah, 'Ayn Zarbah, Maṣṣīṣah, Albistān (Abulustian), and Yarpūz; via the Caucasus to Qaysāriyyah, via Behesnī to Sumaysāt; and via al-Ḥadath and Zibātrah to Malatyah.¹⁰² Mar'ash was first captured in 16/637 by Muslim troops led by Khālīd b. al-Walīd, who decided to demolish the town after the surrender of its Byzantine garrison.¹⁰³ Later, Caliph Mu'āwiyah rebuilt Mar'ash and installed a garrison in it. However, after the death of Caliph Yazīd b. Mu'āwiyah (36/683), the Byzantine incursions against the town were so severe and frequent that its inhabitants felt compelled to abandon it.¹⁰⁴ Mar'ash, however, was restored, fortified, and again populated by al-'Abbās, the son of Caliph al-Walīd b. 'Abd al-Malik. But, by exploiting the opportunity presented by Caliph Marwān's preoccupation with his struggle against the people of Ḥimṣ, the Byzantine Emperor Constantine V marched

¹⁰⁰ Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 412; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 631; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 413; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 298.

¹⁰¹ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 667; Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 415.

¹⁰² *EL*², s.v. "Mar'ash".

¹⁰³ Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 224; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, p. 319.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

toward Mar'ash, besieged it, and had it finally destroyed after driving out its Muslim population in 129/746.¹⁰⁵ After suppressing the uprising in Ḥimṣ in 130/748, Caliph Marwān had Mar'ash rebuilt, including the castle at the centre of the town, which came to be called al-Marwānī after him.¹⁰⁶ Once again, however, in 137/754, the Byzantines sacked the town. It was not until 151/768 that Caliph al-Manṣūr had it rebuilt and fortified by Ṣāliḥ b. 'Alī, who also installed there a garrison, which was later strengthened by Caliph al-Mahdī.¹⁰⁷ According to Yāqūt, the town was protected by double walls and a ditch.¹⁰⁸

Al-Ḥadath (Adata), situated between Malaṭyah, Mar'ash, and Sumaysāṭ on the upper course of the Ḥūrīth (Aksu), one of the main tributaries of the River Jayḥān (Pyramus), was another important stronghold of the Mesopotamian frontier.¹⁰⁹ Al-Ḥadath, which was also known as al-Ḥamrā' (the Red) because of the colour of the soil thereabout, was conquered in the days of Caliph 'Umar I by Ḥabīb b. Maslamah.¹¹⁰ Under Mu'āwiyah, the town was fortified and garrisoned and was used as a starting point from which Muslims would launch their raids against the Byzantine territories. During the strife between the Umayyads and the 'Abbāsids, the Byzantines took advantage of the opportunity and launched an attack during

¹⁰⁵ Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 224.

¹⁰⁶ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 5, p. 107.

¹⁰⁷ Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 225; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, p. 319.

¹⁰⁸ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 5, p. 107.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 320; Le Strange, *Lands*, p. 122; *idem*, *Palestine*, pp. 443-4.

which they succeeded in laying waste al-Ḥadath.¹¹¹ It seems that it was not until 161/778, after a successful raid into the Byzantine lands, that the 'Abbāsid commander al-Ḥasan b. Qaḥṭabah advised Caliph al-Mahdī of the advantage of rebuilding al-Ḥadath. In fact, the construction started in the same year and was completed in 169/786, the year in which the Caliph himself died.¹¹² Under the short rule of Caliph al-Hādī, al-Ḥadath, which also came to be known as al-Mahdīyah and al-Muḥammadiyah, was garrisoned with 4,000 levied troops from Syria, Jazīrah, and Khurāsān. As a reward these troops received plots of land for housing, pay of 40 dinars, and a one-off bonus of 300 dirhams.¹¹³ Sometime during the same year, the garrison was augmented by another 20,000 warriors, who were transferred from the fortresses of Malaṭyah, Shimshāṭ, Sumaysāṭ, Kaysūm, Dulūk, and Ra'bān.¹¹⁴ The buildings of al-Ḥadath, which were constructed of sun-dried brick, could not however long withstand the harsh climate of the region and the town, including its protective wall, was seriously damaged by heavy rain and snow. This seems to have encouraged the Byzantines to overrun the town once again and destroy it completely

¹¹⁰Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 223; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, p. 320; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 2, p. 228.

¹¹¹Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 223; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, p. 320.

¹¹²*Ibid.*; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 369.

¹¹³Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 223; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, p. 320.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*

by fire in 170/787.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, soon afterward, Caliph al-Rashīd had it rebuilt, fortified, and garrisoned once again.¹¹⁶

Malatyah (Melitene), situated near the upper course of the Euphrates, was the largest, strongest, and most important Muslim stronghold on the Mesopotamian frontier.¹¹⁷

Like al-Ḥadath, Malatyah was first conquered in the time of Caliph 'Umar by Ḥabīb b. Maslamah but it was soon after retaken from Muslim hands. When Mu'āwiyah became the governor of Syria and Jazīrah, he had to send Ḥabīb again against Malatyah. In 36/657, Ḥabīb managed to recapture the town by storm, after which he garrisoned it with troops brought from Syria, Jazīrah, and other parts of the Islamic State. Subsequently, Malatyah became one of the frontier strongholds and was used as an important base from which the Muslims launched their raids against the Byzantine lands.¹¹⁸ During the strife between Caliph 'Abd al-Malik and 'Abdallāh b. al-Zubayr, the people of Malatyah, for an unspecified reason, are reported to have abandoned the town, which encouraged the Byzantines to raid it and demolish its structures.¹¹⁹ Under Caliph 'Umar II, the town was rebuilt and settled by Muslim inhabitants brought from the neighbouring town of Ṭurandah, three stages distant from Malatyah itself. After an unsuccessful attempt in 123/741, the Byzantines were

¹¹⁵Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 227; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, p. 320.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹¹⁷Isṭakhri, *Masālik*, p. 82; Le Strange, *Lands*, p. 120; *idem*, *Palestine*, pp. 499-500; *EI*², s.v. "Malatya".

¹¹⁸Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 222; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, p. 317.

¹¹⁹Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, vol. 2, p. 506; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 223; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, p. 317.

able in 133/750 to launch an attack on the town, drive its Muslim inhabitants out of it, and raze it to the ground. During the same incursion the Byzantines also destroyed the fortress (*ḥiṣn*) of Qalāwdhiyah, located near Malatyah, after driving out its people.¹²⁰ Six years later, in 139/757, Caliph al-Manṣūr directed 'Abd al-Wahhāb b. Ibrāhīm and al-Ḥasan b. Qaḥṭabah to take charge of rebuilding and fortifying the town. Accompanying Khurāsānī troops, who were reinforced by 70,000 troops recruited from Syria and Jazīrah, thousands of builders and workmen (*fa'lah*) of all professions, brought from all parts of the State, commenced the construction sometime in 140/758 and completed it six months later. The construction work also included the rebuilding of Ḥiṣn Qalāwdhiyah and two new military guard posts (*masāliḥ*, sing. *musallaḥah*), one of which was 30 miles from Malatyah while the other was positioned on the bank of the River Qubāqib.¹²¹ As for Malatyah itself, it was then garrisoned by 4,000 warriors from nearby Mesopotamian tribes. As a reward, each man was allotted 10 dinars over and above his normal pay, as well as an extraordinary allowance (*ma'ūnah*) of 100 dinars. However, unlike the common practice in other frontier strongholds, the garrison troops in Malatyah were given arable lands (*mazāri'*, sing. *mazra'ah*) and provided at the same time with collective accommodation. Each company (*'arāfah*) of 10 to

¹²⁰Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 223; Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, vol. 2, p. 518.

¹²¹Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 223; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 3, p. 392; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, p. 319.

15 men was given two habitations, one above and one below, and under both was a stable.¹²²

To the south-west of Malaṭyah, approximately five farsakhs away, lay the frontier stronghold of Zibaṭrah (Sozopetra), which is reported to have been named after the daughter of al-Rūm, grandson of Shem, son of Noah.¹²³ Like al-Ḥadath, Zibaṭrah was first conquered by Muslim armies in the time of Caliph 'Umar I by the renowned commander Ḥabīb b. Maslamah al-Fahrī. Having been destroyed by the Byzantines in the time of the last Umayyad Caliph, Marwān b. Muḥammad, Caliph al-Manṣūr had it rebuilt and refortified. Zibaṭrah is also mentioned to have been rebuilt and regarrisoned in the time of Caliph al-Rashīd after having been destroyed by the Byzantines in 169/785.¹²⁴ Thereafter, the town was twice subjected to Byzantine destruction, the last occasion being in 223/838 when Byzantine forces, led by Emperor Theophilus, laid waste the town after killing and taking captive thousands of its Muslim inhabitants.¹²⁵ During his retaliatory campaign against the Byzantine stronghold of 'Ammurīyah in 223/838, Caliph al-Mu'taṣim sought to enhance Zibaṭrah militarily not only by rebuilding and fortifying the town itself, but also by

¹²²Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 223; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, p. 319; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 5, p. 193; Le Strange, *Palestine*, p. 499.

¹²³Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 3, p. 131; Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Masālik*, p. 97; Le Strange, *Lands*, p. 121; *idem*, *Palestine*, p. 554.

¹²⁴Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 228; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, p. 321; Bosworth, "Byzantium", p. 59.

¹²⁵Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 228; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, p. 321; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 55-6; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 581; K. al-'Uyūn, p. 389; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 39.

erecting in its vicinity numerous new fortresses such as the fortresses of Ṭabārajī, al-Ḥusaynīyah, Banī al-Mu'min, and Raḥwān.¹²⁶

Among other strongholds of the Mesopotamian frontier was Ḥiṣn Manṣūr (Perrhe), which lay west of the Euphrates about one day's journey from Zibaṭrah. The fortress owed its name to its builder, Manṣūr b. Ja'wanah b. Ḥārith al-'Āmirī, of the Qays tribe. After superintending its building and restoration during the days of the last Umayyad Caliph, Marwān, Ibn Ja'wanah was stationed there along with a considerable number of troops from Syria and Jazīrah with orders to counter any Byzantine incursion against the Muslim territories.¹²⁷ During the 'Abbāsid time, Ḥiṣn Manṣūr is reported to have been rebuilt, fortified, and garrisoned by Hārūn al-Rashīd during the reign of his father, Caliph al-Mahdī.¹²⁸ According to Yāqūt, the fortress was well protected. Its defensive system consisted of a wall with three gates and a ditch, and it had in its midst a fort, which also defended by double walls.¹²⁹

¹²⁶Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, p. 186.

¹²⁷Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 228; Qudāmah, *Kharāj*, p. 321; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 2, p. 266. According to Balādhurī, Ibn Ja'wanah was killed in 140/758 by Caliph al-Manṣūr after supporting 'Abdallāh b. 'Alī in his rebellion.

¹²⁸*Ibid.*

¹²⁹Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 2, p. 265; Le Strange, *Lands*, p. 123; *idem*, *Palestine*, p. 454.

The last recognizable stronghold of the Mesopotamian frontier was the fortress of Bahasnā, which lay near Mar'ash, to the west of Ḥiṣn Manṣūr and was described as one of the most impregnable of fortresses.¹³⁰

As part of the defensive system of the Muslim northern frontiers, the Syrian and Mesopotamian strongholds were backed at their rear by another line of fortified towns stretching from Anṭākiyah to the westward bend of the Euphrates. During the early days of Islam and the Umayyad Caliphs, this line of fortified towns was administratively and militarily part of the so-called northern frontier. Nevertheless, in 170/787, it was separated off by Caliph al-Rashīd into an independent province (*jund*) under the name al-'Awāṣim.¹³¹ Within their military function, the fortified towns of the frontier province of al-'Awāṣim acted not only as a second defence line against any penetration by Byzantine forces, but also as depots capable of reinforcing the advance frontier strongholds with the arms and manpower needed in time of crisis. Moreover, the 'Awāṣim towns could also provide shelter for Muslims returning from their expeditions or issuing from the *thugūr*.¹³² The most notable fortified towns of al-'Awāṣim in the early 'Abbāsid period were Manbij, Dulūk, Ra'bān, Qūrus, Anṭākiyah, and Tīzīn.¹³³

¹³⁰Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 1, p. 516.

¹³¹Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 234; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 156; Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 262; Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence*, pp. 86-91; Le Strange, *Palestine*, pp. 25-6, 36; Bosworth, "Byzantium", p. 54; Kennedy, *'Abbāsid Caliphate*, p. 130.

¹³²Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 156; Qudāmāh, *Kharāj*, p. 186.

¹³³Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 156.

The 'Abbāsids' efforts in restoring, fortifying, and establishing new fortress towns did not in fact end along their northern frontier, but extended to include the north-eastern frontier stretching along the lands of Armenia and Adharbayjān. Since the time of its conquest by Ḥabīb b. Maslamah al-Fahrī in the days of Caliph 'Uthmān, Muslim authority in Armenia had to face three different threats: the Byzantines from the north-west, the Khazars from the north-east, and the local Armenian princes (*baṭāriqah*, sing. *baṭrīq*), who, despite their peace treaties with the Muslims, always looked for a chance to rebel.¹³⁴ In order to counter these challenges and thus affirm their authority in this part of their empire, the Muslims sought from the very beginning to establish a permanent and strong military presence in the region. As in many other parts of their conquered lands, this was accomplished by transplanting many Arab tribes from Iraq, Syria, and Jazīrah into some of Armenia's main towns, which thereupon were transformed into Islamic administrative and military centres.¹³⁵ Among the most recognizable of these fortress towns, which continued to play a military role in 'Abbāsīd times, were Bardha'ah, Baylaqān, Bāb al-Abwāb, Shamkūr, Nashwā, Kisāl, Tiflīs, Dabīl, and Qālīqalā, the last of these being rebuilt, fortified, and garrisoned by Jazīrian troops in 133/751, after having been destroyed

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 234, 242, 244; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 90; Fukuzo, 'Abbāsīd Autocracy, p. 112.

by the Byzantines in 139/757.¹³⁶ In addition to these old administrative and military centres, the 'Abbāsids also rebuilt, fortified, and garrisoned other Armenian's towns. In order to counter the continuous incursions of the Khazars, Caliph al-Manṣūr is reported to have rebuilt and garrisoned the Armenian fortress towns of Kamkh, Bāb Wāq, Allān, Muḥammadiyah, and the two towns of Arjīl al-Ṣuḡhrā and Arjīl al-Kubrā, which were then garrisoned by troops brought from Palestine.¹³⁷

Besides the regular troops stationed in the various Armenian towns and fortresses, the 'Abbāsids had to compensate the indignation of many of the old Arab settlers and consequently their transformation from being *muqātilah* into mundane traders, landlords, and rebels. Hence, by following the line of Muslim old policy, the 'Abbāsids sought to transplant many new Arab tribesmen into the region. Thus, during the reign of Caliph al-Rashīd, the governors Yūsuf b. Rāshid al-Sulamī of Nizār, Yazīd b. Mazyad al-Shaybānī of Rabī'ah, and 'Abd al-Kabīr b. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd of Taghlib are all reported to have transplanted many Arab tribesmen, mainly from their own tribes, from Jazīrah to Armenia.¹³⁸

¹³⁶Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 236; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 500; Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence*, pp. 50-1; Fukuzo, *'Abbāsid Autocracy*, p. 73. According to al-Balādhurī (*Futūḥ*, p. 236), Qālīqalā was the subject of another Byzantine incursion during the reign of the 'Abbāsid Caliph al-Mu'taṣim and, although the Byzantine army failed to capture the town, they did manage to cause great damage to its protective wall. Subsequently, al-Mu'taṣim spent 500,000 dirhams in fortifying Qālīqalā, including the rebuilding of its wall.

¹³⁷Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 246; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 372.

¹³⁸Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 427; Shākir, *Banī al-'Abbās*, vol. 2, pp. 284-5; Fukuzo, *'Abbāsid Autocracy*, p. 73.

Unlike Armenia, in Adharbayjān the 'Abbāsīd authority faced no direct external challenges. Instead, the main threats were internally confined. The first of these was represented by some of the old Arab families who had settled in the region since the days of Caliph 'Alī and its governor al-Ash'ath b. Qays al-Kindī. In course of time, having claimed a vast tract of land, some of these Arab families eventually became local rulers, resisting on many occasions any intervention on the part of the central government or its representatives in the region, especially when it came to tax collecting.¹³⁹ The second most serious challenge was represented by the uprising of Bābak al-Khurramī, who was most probably one of the indigenous lords of Adharbayjān. His uprising, which started in 201/817 and lasted for more than 20 years, finding support among the indigenous lords as well as some of the Arab leaders in the region, constituted a real threat to the 'Abbāsīds' sovereignty in this part of their empire.¹⁴⁰ In order to affirm their authority in Adharbayjān, the early 'Abbāsīd Caliphs resorted to the same policy that they used in Armenia. They handed the governorship post in Adharbayjān to notable Arab chiefs and encouraging them to take with them many of their fellow tribesmen, mainly from Iraq and Jazīrah, so that in their new situation they could serve as instruments of state control.¹⁴¹ Among the towns and villages that these tribal militias settled in and eventually transformed into strong fortresses were Marrand, Miyānij, Barzah, Shāhī,

¹³⁹Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 404-6; Fukuzo, 'Abbāsīd Autocracy, pp. 109-11.

¹⁴⁰Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 54-5. For more on the Arab settlement in Adharbayjān and Armenia as well as the uprising of Bābak and his origins, see Fukuzo, 'Abbāsīd Autocracy, pp. 108-123.

¹⁴¹Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 371; Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 386; Fukuzo, 'Abbāsīd Autocracy, pp. 108-10.

Tabrīz, Waḥash, and Arsaq.¹⁴² In addition to these regional strongholds, the 'Abbāsīd authority in the Adharbayjān continued to make use of the old administrative and military centres, which they had inherited from the Umayyads. The most important amongst these were Ardabīl and Marāghah. Ardabīl, situated on the upper course of the River Andarāh in eastern Adharbayjān, was the seat of the Marzubān at the time of the Arab conquest.¹⁴³ Like most other parts of Adharbayjān, Ardabīl was taken by peace treaty (*ṣulḥ*), in 22/643.¹⁴⁴ Under Caliph 'Alī, his governor in the region, al-Ash'ath b. Qays, took Ardabīl as his main administrative and military base, where he brought and settled many Arab fighters.¹⁴⁵ Under the Umayyads, the town remained the seat of authority until 112/230, when it was captured by the Khazars.¹⁴⁶ Although, soon after, the Muslims regained Ardabīl, its administrative and military weight seems to have shifted to the town of Marāghah.¹⁴⁷ Under the 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Ma'taṣim, Ardabīl finally reacquired its

¹⁴²Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. pp. 404-6; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 371; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 12, 16.

¹⁴³Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 400.

¹⁴⁴The *ṣulḥ* stipulated that the Muslims must not kill or enslave the inhabitants, nor destroy the fire temples, nor prevent the people from observing their religious rites, and that they had obligations to protect them from depredation at the hands of the Kurds of Balāsajān, Sablān, and Sātrūdān. In return, the inhabitants were to pay them 800,000 dirhams. Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 400; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 1, p. 129.

¹⁴⁵Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 404.

¹⁴⁶Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 32; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, p. 70.

¹⁴⁷Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 383.

military significance as it was fortified and became the base from which the 'Abbāsīd forces launched their final campaign against Bābak.¹⁴⁸

Marāghah, which lay to the south-east of Lake Urmīyah, was first constructed by the Umayyad Caliph Marwān b. Muḥammad.¹⁴⁹ Under the 'Abbāsīds, Marāghah grew quickly in status as it is recorded to have been the seat of the 'Abbāsīd authority (*manzil al-Sulṭān*) in Adharbayjān.¹⁵⁰ Such a distinguished position, however, made the town a potential target in the region for rebel forces such as those of Ṣadaqah b. 'Alī and al-Wajnā' b. Rawwād. Therefore, in order to counter any attack, the governor of Adharbayjān in the time of Caliph al-Rashīd, Khuzaymah b. Khāzim, had to fortify Marāghah by building a protective wall and garrisoning it with a considerable number of troops.¹⁵¹

In addition to the main military centres in the heartland and the frontiers, there were thousands of small-scale military posts, packed with troops, spread all over the lands of the 'Abbāsīd state. From a military perspective, these military posts could be classified into two categories: look-out posts (*arbiṭah*, sing. *ribāṭ*) and guard posts (*masāliḥ*, sing. *musallaḥah*). The difference between the two is that the *arbiṭah* tended to be more confined to the far limits of the frontier lines, especially those

¹⁴⁸Tabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 11-3.

¹⁴⁹Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 404.

¹⁵⁰Azdī, *Tārīkh*, p. 383.

¹⁵¹Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 405; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, vol. 5, p. 93; Le Strange, *Lands*, p. 164; Fukuzo, *'Abbāsīd Autocracy*, pp. 109-10.

along the seacoast. Besides their mission of countering any small-scale attacks by enemy forces, the main purpose of the *arbiṭah* was to give early warning of any anticipated attack by the enemy. By so doing, they would give the people in the various villages and towns in their vicinity the chance to secure themselves and their livestock, as well as to mobilize their forces to face the enemy's incursion.¹⁵² In addition to regular troops, the *arbiṭah* were usually manned by a considerable number of volunteers, who would come and station themselves there with the wish to take part in the *jihād* against the infidels.¹⁵³

The *masāliḥ* in their turn could be classified into two types. First were the permanent type, usually erected along the land borders, most frequently at the intersection of passes between the Islamic territories and the enemy's lands.¹⁵⁴ The second type of guard post was temporary in nature. These sort of *masāliḥ* were usually set up along the routes used to deliver provisions to the army while on campaign, around military encampments in time of war, and around a city or a region where an uprising or disturbance was taking place.¹⁵⁵ In addition to the prime purpose of both types of guard post as early warning posts against any suspicious movement by the enemy, they were also responsible for preventing the enemy's agents from sneaking from or into the hostile areas, which could be either non-

¹⁵²Maqdisī, *Aḥsan al-Taḳāṣīm*, p. 177.

¹⁵³Shākir, *Banī al-'Abbās*, vol. 2, p. 298; *El*², s.v. "Ribāṭ".

¹⁵⁴Yāqūt (*Mu'jam*, vol. 1, p. 385), for example, indicates that in the time of Caliph al-Ma'mūn there were 31 *musallaḥah* situated all along the boundary line between Khurāsān and Ṭabaristān right up to the Daylam territories. The number of soldiers stationed in each of these *musallaḥah* ranged between 200 and 2,000.

Muslim neighbouring territories or zones of civil strife. This task was usually fulfilled by monitoring, searching, interrogating, and detaining those travellers whose activities caused suspicion. These security procedures might become much tighter in times of crisis, during which these guard posts would set up a well-knit siege situation. Thus, they would prevent people from travelling from or into the affected area, the only exception being granted to very well-known merchants and those who bore permission from the authority to return to their homes. Still, even these people were not allowed to pass before everything that they were carrying had been searched thoroughly, including their letters.¹⁵⁶

Finally, it should be noted that although these security measures taken by the guard posts were effective in limiting the enemy's threat, they did not always succeed in preventing the enemy's agents from penetrating the siege and thus delivering their secret reports. A good example of such a case occurred during the years of the civil war in 194/810. In order to prevent al-Ma'mūn's agents, who had been previously planted in Baghdad, from delivering their reports, al-Faḍl b. al-Rabī' set up guard posts all along the border with Khurāsān. Nevertheless, al-Ma'mūn's agents were able to deliver their reports by depositing them in the hollowed-out board of a packsaddle, which they then sent out with a woman. The woman was able to pass

¹⁵⁵Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 565, 623, 631; vol. 8, pp. 379, 386, 435, 490, 493, 497; vol. 9, pp. 14, 47.

¹⁵⁶Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 379, 386. It is worth noting that in some cases the siege enforced by these guard posts could be very comprehensive, to the point that whoever tried to break it for any reason would be beheaded without questioning. See Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 7, pp. 565, 623, 631-2; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 376; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, vol. 10, p. 98.

through the guard posts unmolested and unsearched, as she was taken to be simply travelling from one village to another.¹⁵⁷

Summary

The 'Abbāsīds' capitals were strategically placed not only as administrative centres but also as military bases. Forsaking Damascus (the centre of Umayyad support), Arabia (lacking in resources), Egypt, and Khurāsān (both at the fringes of the Islamic Empire), 'Abbāsīds settled on Iraq as their natural base of support and operations. After tentative efforts to settle on the appropriate site in Iraq, Baghdad was finally chosen during the reign of al-Manṣūr. It had the great advantage of centrality at a meeting place of land and water routes, and this area on the west bank of the Tigris, where the two great rivers of Mesopotamia approached each other, had a natural defensive advantage. The city's natural defences were enhanced by the construction of an elaborate defence system consisting of a trench and two walls (the inner wall having many projecting towers), separated by an intervallum, which were pierced by four iron gates, double in construction with an intervening angled corridor.

The Khurāsānī troops, as individuals and groups, received land for building within the walls of the city as well as in its outskirts. A great proportion of them concentrated in plots north and north-west of the Round City where they settled according to a regional rather ethnical or tribal basis. Despite the careful planning of the city and its military settlement, mutiny of army personal did brake out under al-

¹⁵⁷Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 8, p. 386; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 5, p. 367.

Manṣūr, necessitating him to divide his army into two separate detachments, one in Baghdad while the other in the newly built suburb of al-Ruṣāfah, on east bank just opposite the Round City. Caliph al-Manṣūr also founded a military centre at al-Rāfiqah, which was used to reinforce the Byzantine frontier and keep a close eye on the Arab tribes in Jazīrah and Syria. In 221/836, al-Mu'taṣim laid the foundation of a new 'Abbāsīd capital at Sāmarrā', a shift which was associated with the large-scale introduction of Central Asian troops into the central army, since their chaotic behaviour in Baghdad had enraged the whole city. In Sāmarrā' the different groups of soldiers were settled in quarters reflecting their original homelands.

Apart from their capital cities, the 'Abbāsīds also continued to militarize many of the old garrison cities (*amṣar*) such as Mawṣil, Qayrawān, Tūnis, Ṭubnah, Fuṣṭaṭ, Marw, Rayy, and al-Manṣūrah in Sind. Some new garrison towns were also built to handle new threats, e.g. Sisar in the district of Hamḍān, in Jibal province. The 'Abbāsīds also had a system of strongholds stretching all along their land frontiers, the importance of which is demonstrated in the two-phase defence system of the Byzantines on the other side of the Muslims' northern border. The Muslims' frontier defence system, known as the *thughūr* system, consisted of fortresses and strongholds set intermittently along the border from Malaṭyah in the east to Ṭarsūs in the west. Maṣṣiṣah (Mopsuestia) was one of the earliest towns of the Syrian frontier zone (*thughūr al-Shām*) that the 'Abbāsīds sought to fortify and, by taking appropriate measures, to man. They also put in place a system of organization for the Syrian frontier towns of Kafarbayyā, Adhanah, 'Ayn Zarbah, al-Hārūniyah, al-

Kanīṣah al-Sawdā', Ṭuwānah, and, the most important, Ṭarsūs, which held the key position separating the Muslim and Christian worlds in Asia Minor. Similarly, on the Mesopotamian frontier (*thughūr al-Jazīrah*), the strongholds of Mar'ash, al-Ḥadath, Zibātrah, Ḥisn Manṣūr, and Malaṭyah (the largest, strongest, and most important of these strongholds) underwent various fortunes throughout the first century of 'Abbāsīd Caliphate.

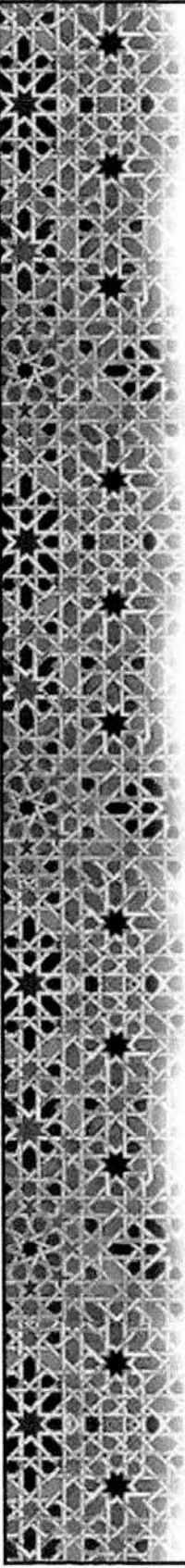
The Syrian and Mesopotamian strongholds were backed by another line of fortified towns stretching from Anṭakīyah to the westward bend of the Euphrates, marking the line of the northern frontier under the Umayyads. Under the 'Abbāsīds this became a separate province (*jund*) known as al-'Awaṣim and the fortified towns in this province acted not only as a second line of defence but also as supply depots for the more advanced positions.

In addition, the 'Abbāsīds maintained fortress towns in the north-east frontier region bordering the lands of Armenia and Adharbayjān. In Armenia, where the threat represented by the indigenous Armenian and the Khazars, these included the fortress towns of Bardha'ah, Baylaqān, Bāb al-Abwāb, shamkūr, Nashwā, Kisāl, Tiflīs, Qālīqalā, Kamkh, Bāb wāq, Allān, and Muḥammadiyah.

In Adharbayjān, where there were no direct external challenges to their power, the 'Abbāsīds sought to pacify the region by encouraging the settlement in it of Arab tribesmen from Iraq and Jazīrah. In addition to towns and villages settled by these tribal militias, which eventually became strong fortresses (e.g. those at Marrand and

Tabrīz), the 'Abbāsids continued to make use of the old administrative and military centres inherited from the Umayyads, such as those at Ardabīl and Marāghah.

In addition to these principal military posts on the frontiers and in the 'Abbāsid heartland, there were also thousands of smaller look-out (*arbiṭah*, sing. *ribāṭ*) and guard posts (*masālih*, sing. *musallaḥah*) (either permanent or temporary) scattered across the lands of the 'Abbāsid State.



Conclusion

In the first chapter of this study we have examined the elements that composed the early 'Abbāsīd army, including the Khurāsānīs, the *abnā'*, the Arabs, the *mawālī*, the Turks, and some additional minor elements from more distant parts of the Islamic Empire.

The original fighting forces of the early 'Abbāsīds were composed of men recruited in Khurāsān, principally Arabs tribesmen who, for various reasons, felt aggrieved by the policy of the Umayyad and their agents in Khurāsān. In addition to these, there were also a considerable numbers of local *mawālī* and even slaves who found the key to their freedom in the 'Abbāsīd revolution.

For the major part of the first century of the 'Abbāsīd rule, the Khurāsānī continued to be the most distinguished unit of the central forces in Baghdad. However, during that period the composition of the Khurāsānī forces underwent a transformation, as from the time of al-Ma'mūn the non-Arab elements became the more predominant part of its composition.

At the time of the civil war between al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn, the descendants of the old Khurāsānī veterans, best known as *abnā'*, emerged as the most important component of the central army in Baghdad. Nonetheless, from the time of Caliph al-Mu'taṣim, the position of the *abnā'* in the central army started to become eclipsed by the growing number of the Turkish (i.e. Central Asians) recruits and the shift of the capital from Baghdad to Sāmarrā'.

In the earlier stage of the ‘Abbāsids’ rule, the central forces in Baghdad also included among their ranks many Arab tribesmen, mostly Iraqis. Yet, their role seems to have ended in the time of al-Manṣūr when, most likely, they were dispatched to Ifrīqiya not only on military service but to settle there permanently. Thereafter, no further tribesmen from Iraq, Jazīrah, and Syria were admitted to the central armies. Instead, recruits from these regions were most often stationed in the frontier zones and encouraged to resettle there. The replacement of the ‘*aṭā*’ by the *artizāq* system of remuneration also marked the end of the Arab prerogative in the Muslim military institution.

The *mawālī*, predominantly manumitted slaves, who served in the early ‘Abbāsid consisted mainly of two groups: those who were attached directly to the ‘Abbāsid Caliphs and those were affiliated to various state dignitaries and army commanders. In addition to these, from the time of Caliph al-Mahdī but mainly in the time of al-Ma’mūn and more under al-Mu’taṣim, increasing numbers of Turks, principally slaves, were recruited to the ranks of the ‘Abbāsid central army. Other elements who played a role in the ‘Abbāsid armies included black Africans, Sayābijah, Ṣaqālibah, Nubians, Indians, and other groups from the margins of the Islamic Empire.

In the second chapter, centred on the *Dīwān al-Jund*, attention has been given to the modifications introduced by the ‘Abbāsids to the system for registering soldiers and remunerating them on a regular basis. The most obvious modification was the move from enlistment by *nasab* to enlistment in the *Dīwān* according to the geographical

origins of soldiers. Those who administered this system, the *Kuttāb al-Jund*, required specialist knowledge of the distinguishing features of men, their characteristics, the distinguishing marks of beasts, and ability in arithmetic.

In our examination of the mechanism employed to ensure regular payment of the troops, we described the ‘document of authorization’ (*ṣakk*), the involvement of the Caliph or his vizier, and the work of the Paymaster General, the Award Office, and the officials known as *munfiqān* (or *mu’tīn*) and ‘*urāḍ*. The main problem in applying this system was the tendency for pay to fall into arrears, provoking soldiers to mutiny, and the efforts taken to circumvent this problem included taking loans from wealthy people, postponing the pay-day until taxes had been received, substituting foodstuffs for pay, or passing on to the army commanders the responsibility for soldiers’ pay.

With regard to the ‘*aṭā*’ institution, under the ‘Abbāsids, this became, as far as the military were concerned, principally a cash allowance paid to the Arab tribal forces as long as they were on active military service. The *arzāq*, similarly, ceased to be state-sponsored hand-outs of foodstuffs and evolved instead to become a system of cash allowances paid to those registered in the central *Dīwān* in Baghdad. In assessing rates of pay, the ‘Abbāsids took into account two main factors—military division and location—with the cavalrymen generally receiving double that paid to infantrymen on account of the former’s responsibility to provide out of their pay for their riding beasts. Even so, the rates of pay fluctuated a great deal as they depended

to a very large extent on the amounts of booty taken from the enemy, so that this often became a cause of dispute between the Caliphs and their fighting men.

In the third chapter of this study, in which we dealt with the military units and support services, we looked in turn at the cavalry, infantry, and the non-combatant groups which supported the army from its setting out on the march to the end of the fighting and the dividing of the booty.

From small beginnings, the 'Abbāsids' cavalry quickly increased as large numbers of additional horses were seized from the defeated Syrian armies and put into the 'Abbāsīd fighting machine. With the later introduction of Turks into the 'Abbāsīd army, the strength of the cavalry reached an all-time peak. Our discussion of the training of the 'Abbāsīd cavalry included information concerning the tactics and skills of evasion, jousting, hit and run, use of the bow and lance from horseback, and the skilful manoeuvres practised in polo. We have discussed also the weapons used by the cavalry (including the bow and lance and, later with the recruiting of Turkish cavalry, such new types of weapons as the lasso) and the cavalry's position on the battlefield and their other duties, including reconnaissance, guard duty, and setting ambushes.

The infantry would often lead in the initial clash with the enemy and their value was most clearly demonstrated when facing unmounted foes and in difficult terrain. Among the weapons they employed were swords, long lances, bows, shields, battle-axes, various kinds of clubs, and slings. The archers, a fighting body that brought into the 'Abbāsīd forces a particular skill of Khurāsān, usually led off the battle by

firing a heavy salvo of arrows. Their numbers and abilities were later enhanced by the introduction of Turkish fighters famed for their great skills in mounted bowmanship. To the earlier arsenal of hurling machines, the ‘Abbāsids brought new innovations as they employed, for the first time in Muslim history, flaming naphtha, necessitating its practitioners’ use of specially made fire-proof suits.

The ‘Abbāsīd forces were regularly attended by pioneer and labour corps (*fa‘alah*), whose duties included road-making and mending, bridge construction, digging work, and fortress-building and demolishing. There were, in addition, the army police, whose work was to maintain order in the ranks, track down spies, and execute punishments. Further, among the non-combatant units, there were guides, physicians, chemists, judges, provisioners, translators, and spies.

In the fourth chapter we discussed the ‘Abbāsīd armies’ means of communication, army supplies and provisioning, levies, volunteers, the exchange of captives, and army command and ranks.

Within the area of communications, we first described the system of mounted post-riders (*barīd*), used for transmitting messages and delivering military reinforcements with the utmost of speed. The mounts used could be either horses, camels, or mules, depending on the terrain to be traversed. Carrier-pigeons were also used in conveying messages and, over shorter distances, messages might be transmitted using drums, trumpets, banners, or, occasionally in the relief of besieged cities, the shooting of arrows with messages attached.

With the extending of the *artizāq* system under the ‘Abbāsids, the state now became responsible for provisioning the troops in time of war. Supplies carried with the army could be supplemented by contributions from fellow-Muslims along the route of march or near the battlefield, or by plunder seized from the enemy. While dried food would be the soldiers’ staple during the march, they could enjoy freshly cooked meat during encampment.

The ‘Abbāsids would sometimes need to raise additional forces by a system of levy and, in addition, they would sometimes employ volunteers (*mutaṭawwi‘ah*), most of whom were Arab tribesmen of Iraq, Jazīrah, or Syria who joined the army for religious or financial motives. Other supernumeraries would include camp-followers (slaves, freemen, and fellow tribesmen), locally recruited militias, and even freed prisoners.

While captured fighters were usually executed immediately after the conclusion of battles, there was a fairly elaborate system for the exchange of captured volunteers and civilians, frequently across the River Lamos in Western Cilicia, every effort being made to balance those exchanged in terms of number, age, gender, and social status.

At the head of army command stood the Caliphs, who would frequently take direct command of their armies, or delegate the task to their sons. Next came the army commanders (*quwwād*), who, since political considerations outweighed military qualifications, might come from a whole variety of races. Tribal allegiances gave

way to geographical considerations in the organization of men under their commanders and a chain of command ran down through the commander of 10,000 men (the *amīr*), commanders of 1,000 (*quwwād*), commanders of 100 (*nuqabā'*), and commanders of 10 (*'araḳfā'*). Moreover, unlike the chain of command under the Umayyads, the 'Abbāsīd chain of command had no deputy (*khalīfah*) to the commander-in-chief.

In the fifth chapter of this study we have examined the mobilization and tactics of the 'Abbāsīd armies in marching, camping, field fighting, and in summer and winter raiding. First, came the selection by the Caliph of the commanders and his presentation to them of the banners, after which the commanders would make all the necessary preparations for the task assigned to the men under their command. After the founding of al-Ruṣāfah in 151/768, the 'Abbāsīds adopted two new troop assembly grounds—al-Bardān and Nahrāwan—on the east bank of the Tigris near Baghdad and later, in Sāmarrā', the area of 'Uyun on the west bank of the Tigris. From these sites the Caliph would usually escort the troops on the first leg of their campaign journey.

Usually, on the march, the army would be divided into five main divisions and would be headed by a scouting party and groups of workmen who prepared the road ahead. The men would break into a single squadron when passing through hostile areas and difficult natural obstacles. The army's camp would be chosen with a view to both sustenance and defence. What nature provided in the latter case might be

supplemented by man-made defences and the stationing of guards around the encampment.

Among the battle tactics employed by the 'Abbāsids were 'hit and run', the 'row', and the old Byzantine formation of 'squadrons'. The soldiers' armour would consist of the coat of mail (*dir'*) or lighter *jawshan*, the wide belt, the helmet, vambraces, and greaves. After giving the signal for battle, the commander would take up a viewpoint from which he could survey the progress of the fighting. In 'Abbāsīd times the banners and standards to which the warriors rallied with their leaders were arranged according to military contingents and not on a tribal basis.

In their conflict with the Byzantines, the 'Abbāsids not only sought to defend their northern borders, but also engaged in a regular system of summer and (less frequently) winter raids into Byzantine territory, the purpose of which, in addition to enhancing the Caliph's prestige, was to keep the soldiers occupied and restrain them from committing unnecessary disturbances and acts of violence.

We have dealt, in the sixth chapter, with a special aspect of 'Abbāsīd military history and that is sea warfare. This was strictly a defensive, rather than offensive, aspect of military activity, as the Syrian and African coasts had to be defended against possible attacks from the Byzantines. Because of the island's support for the Byzantines, the 'Abbāsids attacked Cyprus in 146/763, but it was another ten years before they launched their second naval attack in the Mediterranean, this time against the coast

of Asia Minor. Cyprus, Crete, and Sicily were the concerns of fleets commanded by later ‘Abbāsīd Caliphs.

In the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean, the main problem faced by the ‘Abbāsīds was the piratic raids of the Mayd and occasionally Kurk peoples from the region of Sind, against whom they employed both political measures in Sind itself and the naval action of an enhanced ‘Abbāsīd fleet in the Gulf.

The earliest Muslim naval bases and dockyards were constructed at Qulzum and Alexandria, and others were later constructed at Rosetta, Damietta, and Tinnīs in Egypt; at Barqah and Tūnis in North Africa; at Acre and Tyre, Lādhīqīyah, Şaydā, Beirut, and Ṭarābulus in Syria; at Ṭarsūs in Asia Minor; and at Baṣrah and al-Ubullah in Iraq.

We have described, as far as evidence permits, the various warships employed by the ‘Abbāsīds, which included the *bārijah*, *shīnī*, *shalandī*, *ṭarīdah*, and *qarqūr* (used on the open seas), and the *shadhā*, *sumayrī*, *ḥarrāqah*, and *ṭayyārah* (used as river-going vessels). We have further described the craft of shipbuilding under the ‘Abbāsīds and the sources of the different kinds of timber employed for fashioning various parts of these vessels. Among other details contained in this chapter, we have described the different ranks who formed the crews of the ‘Abbāsīd warships and the terms used to identify them.

In the final chapter of this study, dealing with the ‘Abbāsīd military bases, we looked first at the cities chosen by the ‘Abbāsīds to be the capital of their empire. First, forsaking Damascus, Arabia, Egypt and Khurāsān, they chose Iraq as their centre of operations and ultimately settled on Baghdad as their capital until later, in 221/836, they laid the foundation of a new capital at Sāmarrā’. We have described the ways in which the ‘Abbāsīds fortified these cities, using a system of trenches, walls, an intervallum, and double iron gates with an intervening angled corridor. In addition, under al-Manṣūr, Baghdad’s military suburb of al-Ruṣāfah was built on the east bank of the Round City and the military centre of al-Rāfiqah was also established.

The ‘Abbāsīds also continued to maintain many of the old garrison cities such as Mawṣil, Qayrawān, Tūnis, Ṭubnah, Fuṣṭāṭ, Marw, Rayy, and al-Manṣūrah in Sind, as well as constructing new garrison towns, for example, at Sisar. The ‘Abbāsīds’ frontier defence system, the *thughūr* system, consisted of fortresses stretching along the northern border from Malaṭyah in the east to Tarsus in the west. These Syrian and Mesopotamian strongholds were backed by another line of fortified towns stretching from Anṭakiyah to the westward bend of the Euphrates. Furthermore, the ‘Abbāsīds maintained frontier towns in the north-east of their lands bordering on Armenia and Adharbayjān. In addition, there were thousands of smaller look-out and guard posts scattered across the lands of the ‘Abbāsīd State.

Glossary

The meanings and definitions given below are according to the context in which the words are used in this thesis.

a

'abd (pl. *'abīd*): a slave or serf.

ablaq (pl. *bulq*): a piebald horse.

abnā' al-awla: the sons and grandsons of the Khurāsānī revolutionaries settled in Iraq.

adam: hide.

ahl al-bayt: the House of the Prophet.

ahl al-ḥāḍirah: the urban settlers.

ahl al-kitāb: lit. 'the People of the [holy] Books', i.e. Christians and Jews and to some extent Magians or Zoroastrians (*Majūs*) and Sabaeans.

'allāfah: a foraging party.

amān: a safe-conduct or pardon.

'āmil (pl. *'ummāl*): a tax-gatherer; a governor of a province or district, especially one having financial responsibilities.

amīn (pl. *umanā'*): a man charged with distributing booty to the troops.

amīr (pl. *umarā'*) an army commander; a governor of a province with command of troops.

amīr al-baḥr: the admiral. Cf. *amīr al-mā'* and *amīr al-raḥl*.

amīr al-mu'minīn: the Caliph.

'āmmah: the common people.

'amūd: a mace, war-club.

anṣār (sing. *anṣārī*): lit. 'helpers', i.e. the Companions of the Prophet from the inhabitants of Madīnah, who embraced Islam and supported him, and received and entertained the Muslim emigrants from Makkah.

a'rāb: Arab nomads, Bedouin.

'arīḍ (pl. *'urrāḍ*): an officer responsible for inspecting the troops by reviewing their identity, weapons, mounts, as well as military skills.

'arīf (pl. *'urafā*): an officer in command of ten to fifteen soldiers.

'arīsh: an harbour or roofed enclosure.

'arrādah: a ballista, i.e. a type of mangonel used for casting stones over distance.

'aṣabiyyah: tribal solidarity.

ashtiyām (pl. *ashāyimah*): chief sailors.

'askar (pl. *'asākīr*): an army; a military camp.

'aṭā: a grant, salary, or stipend paid to a soldier.

atbā (sing. *tābi*): a camp-follower.

athqāl: baggage, materials.

'ayn (pl. *'uyūn*): a spy.

'ayyār (pl. *'ayyārūn*): a vagrant, especially one who is armed.

6

bāb (pl. *abwāb*): a gate.

baghl: a mule, the product of the union of a donkey and a mare.

bardhaqah: a small armed escort party accompanying a caravan along its journey.

barīd: a system of communication between the provinces and the caliphal offices; a post-beast.

basmalah: the invocation of the name of God in the saying 'In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful'.

baṭīḥah (pl. *baṭā'ih*): a swamp, especially marshland in southern Iraq.

baṭrīq (pl. *baṭāriqah*): an indigenous lord in Armenia.

bayāt: an unexpected night attack or night raiding.

bayḍah: a helmet covering the top of the head.

bayt al-māl: the Public Treasury.

bazz: linen.

birdhawn: a hinny, the product of the union of a she-donkey and a stallion.

burjās: a target placed over the head of a lance or similar item.

ḍ

dabbābah: a movable wooden tower designed to protect troops while boring into the wall of a fortress.

dabbūs: a mace made of iron or steel with a cubical head.

daftar: a register or a note book. Cf. *jarīdah*.

dā'ī (pl. *du'āt*): a missionary of a *da'wah*.

dalīl (pl. *adillā*): a guide.

dār al-ṣinā'ah: the dockyard.

darrājah: a patrolling cavalry, who would carry out their task beyond the encampment.

da'wah: political propaganda for the 'Abbāsids, 'Alīds, and others.

daydabān (pl. *dayādibah*): a watchman positioned on a mountaintop. Cf. *khūhbānī*.

dhimmī: a non-Muslim whom the Islamic State undertakes to protect in the practice and profession of his religion.

dihqān (pl. *dahāqīn*): an indigenous landlord residing in a village in the old Sassanid land; a hereditary lord of a district in Khurāsān.

dīnār: a gold coin, equivalent to ten to twenty dirhams.

dir': a coat of mail.

dirham: a silver coin.

dīwān (pl. *dawāwīn*): a register of individuals entitled to pay from the government; a government department.

diyah: the payment of compensation for inflicted injury or death; blood-money.

f

fa'alah: workmen.

faqīh (pl. *fuqahā*): a jurist, specialist in Islamic Law.

farḍ 'ayn: an essential obligation that Allah makes incumbent upon all Muslims, such as prayer, fasting, and witnessing to the truth.

fāris (pl. *fursān*): a horseman.

farr: withdrawal, flight.

faṣl: an intervallum.

fatwā (pl. *fatāwā*): a technical term used in Islamic Law to indicate a formal legal opinion.

fay: booty gained without fighting, especially lands.

fidā': ransom.

fitnah: civil strife, a riot.

g

ghawghā': locusts; proletarians, a mob.

ghazw, or *ghazwa*: a raid into enemy territory.

ghilālāh: a garment worn under a coat of mail. Cf. *shalīḥ*.

ghulām (pl. *ghilmān*): a slave; a young man.

ghulūl: taking or stealing from the booty before it is divided.

h

ḥadīth (pl. *aḥādīth*): a tradition of a deed or saying of the Prophet.

ḥājj: pilgrimage to Makkah performed in the month of Dhū al-Ḥijjah.

ḥaras: a bodyguard for caliphs or governors.

ḥasak: thorns; caltrop.

ḥāsir: a soldier fighting without a shield.

ḥulā al-rijāl: the distinguishing features of men.

hilālī: crescent-shape battle formation.

ḥisāb al-taqdīr: the field of arithmetic.

ḥiṣn: fortress.

ḥurr (pl. *aḥrār*): a free man.

i

ibrah: a small needle.

imām: a prayer leader in a mosque; a supreme head of the Muslims qualified to interpret the religion.

iqlīm: a province or administrative district.

j

ja'bah: a quiver.

jaḥīr: a wooden quiver.

janāḥ: a wing or flank of the army.

jarīb: a quantity of crops cultivated from 60×60 cubits of land.

jawshan: a coat of mail made to protect only the front part of the fighter's body.

ji'ālāh: a wage, pay, or like which one gives to another who goes to war as a substitute for him.

jihād: an effort or striving; holy fighting in the cause of Allāh or any other kind of effort to make Islam prevail. *Jihād* is regarded as one of the principles of Islam.

jins: a race, ethnic group.

jizyah: originally tax in general, especially in the old Roman lands; later poll tax imposed on individual *dhimīs* under Islamic law.

jund: a government army; a military district in Syria.

jurazah (pl. *juraz*): a mace.

k

ka'k: dry-biscuit.

kalāb (pl. *kalālīb*): a grappling-iron.

kamīn: an ambush.

kardūs: formation of squadrons.

karr wa farr: hit and run.

kātib (pl. *kuttāb*): a government secretary.

kattān: linen.

khādim (pl. *khudām*): a servant; a eunuch.

khalīfah: a deputy of the commander-in-chief.

khamīs: classical Arabic battle-formation in which the army would be divided into five main divisions.

khandaq: a moat encircling a city or a camp.

khanjar: a dagger.

kharāj: originally tax in general, especially in the old Sassanid lands; later land tax in Islamic Law.

khārijī (pl. *khawārij*): originally a rebel who left the Islamic

community, especially one of the Kūfan Arabs who became estranged from 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib; later a non-'Alid, non-Umayyad Muslim rebel against the 'Abbāsids in Jazīrah, Maghrib or Sijistān.

kharīṭah: a bag.

khāṣṣah: privileged men, the *élite*, the ruling class in contrast to 'āmmah.

khātam: a signet, especially the caliphal signet.

khayl muḍammarah: swift horses.

khayṭ: linen thread.

khil'ah: a garment of honour bestowed by the Caliph upon a subject.

khizānat al-silāḥ: the arms warehouse.

khums (pl. *akhmās*): a fifth.

khuṭṭah (pl. *khuṭaṭ*): residential or collective land, especially at the frontier towns.

kinānah: a quiver made of animal skin.

kūhbānī (pl. *kūhbāniyyah*): a watchman posted on a mountaintop. Cf. *daydabān*.

[

lijām: a ram, used in ancient warships to batter and sink the enemy's ship.

liwā' (pl. *alwiyah*): a banner.

al-liwā' al-a'zam: the great banner or the general commander's banner.

M

madad: reinforcements.

mā'ir: a person who carries the food, prepares it, and serves it to the troops.

majlis al-i'ṭā': the wards Office.

mallāḥ (pl. *mallāḥūn*): a sailor.

mamlūk (pl. *mamālīk*): a slave, especially a Turkish or white slave; later, a white slave soldier.

manjanīq: a mangonel, ballista, machine for casting missiles.

marḥalah (pl. *marāḥil*): a stage; a distance of one day's journey.

markab: a ship. Cf. *safīnah*.

marzubān: a Sassanid frontier lord or hereditary governor.

masīr: a march.

maslaḥah (pl. *masāliḥ*): a guard post.

ma'ūnah: a sum of money occasionally paid to soldiers before their going to war in order to assist them in preparing their arms and beasts.

mawlā (pl. *mawālī*): a liberated slave; a client of an Arab tribesman; a non-Arab Muslim convert; a follower, a patron of a client.

mawqīd (pl. *mawāqīd*): a beacon or cresset.

maydān: a parade ground.

maymanah: an army's right flank.

maysarah: an army's left flank.

mighfar: a helmet covering the head and all the face except the eyes.

mikhlah: a horse's nose-bag.

mikhṣah: an awl.

minṭaqah: a wide belt made of skin to protect the waist and to hold the dagger.

miqlā': a sling.

mīqrāḍ: a pair of scissors.

misallah: a pack-needle.

miṣr (pl. *amṣār*): a garrison town.

mubārazah: individual sword fighting.

muhājirūn: early Muslims who emigrated to Madīnah in the lifetime of the Prophet, before the conquest of Makkah.

mujaffah: horses armoured with cuirasses.

mujāladah: face-to-face fighting using different weapons.

mujāwalah: a tactic of evasion.

mujthamah: shooting a couching animal using the bow or lance.

munāwashah: an archery attack from a distance.

munfiqūn (sing. *munfiq*): paymasters responsible for distributing the pay among the troops. Cf. *mu'tūn* (sing. *mu'tī*).

muqaddimah: an army's van.

murābiṭ (pl. *murābiṭūn* or *murābiṭīn*): a frontier guard.

murtaziq (pl. *murtaziqah*): a full-time professional soldier.

mutaṭawwi'ah: volunteers.

muwallad (pl. *muwalladūn*): a man of mixed origin.

N

nafāḍah: a nocturnal scouting party.

naffāt (pl. *naffātūn*): a naphtha-hurler.

nafṭ: naphtha, "Greek fire".

naqīb (pl. *nuqabā'*): one of the Prophet's representatives in Madīnah before the Hijrah; a leader of the 'Abbāsīd partisans in Khurāsān.

nār al-ḥarb: a fire lit to call the tribe together when the enemy was sighted.

nasab: tribal pedigree.

nāshib (pl. *nashābah*): an archer.

naṭ': a leather mat.

nazīl: leaping over horseback.

nutī (pl. *nawātīy*): a sailor. Cf. *mallāḥ*.

nu'ūṭ (sing. *na't*): a term used to describe the characteristic features of men.

Q

qabā: a short coat.

qabīlah (pl. *qabā'il*): an Arab tribe.

qāḍī (pl. *quḍāt*): a judge who judges according to Islamic Law.

qā'id (pl. *quwwād*): an army general.

qalansūwah: a cap made of fur or other material to protect the head from the helmet.

qār: pitch.

qārib: a general term usually applied to small riverboats.

qārūrah: a small earthenware pot.

qasab: dried date.

qaṭī'a (pl. *qaṭā'ī*): a parcel of land given as a private estate; a fief.

qiblah: the direction to which Muslims turn in praying, i.e. toward Makkah.

R

rabaḍ (pl. *arbāḍ*): a suburb of a city.

rabī'ah (pl. *rabāyā*): the guard who watched over the encampment during the nightly break.

raḍkh: a paltry gift in money or in kind, taken from the booty, then given to a slave, *dhimmi*, or woman.

rā'id: a scout, the officer responsible for finding a suitable place for encampment.

ra'īs (pl. *ru'asā'*): a chief or leader.

rājil (pl. *rajjālah*): an infantryman.

ratīnaj: resin.

rāyah (pl. *rāyāt*): a standard, or flag.

ribāṭ (pl. *arbiṭah*): a look-out post.

riḍā min Āl Muḥammad: an approved leader from the family of the Prophet.

rizq (pl. *arzāq*): food subsistence given to a Muslim enrolled in the *Dīwān*; (in 'Abbāsīd times hard cash paid to a soldier.

rub' (pl. *arbā'*): a quarter of the suburbs of Baghdad.

rāmī (pl. *rumāh*): a soldier armed primarily with bows and arrows. Cf. *nashābah*.

S

sabī: a women or child captives.

ṣadaqah (pl. *ṣadaqāt*): a donation, or voluntary alms.

ṣaff (pl. *ṣuffūf*): a row, line, or rank.

saṭīnah (pl. *sufun*): a ship. Cf. *markab*.

ṣāhib al-akhmās: the person who took the state's fifth of the booty from the battlefield for the Public Treasury.

ṣāḥib al-aqbāḍ: the officer responsible for the booty before its distribution.

ṣāḥib al-liwā': the banner-bearer.

ṣāḥib al-maqāsim: the officer who divided the booty into fifths.

ṣāḥib al-shurṭa: the commander of the police force.

ṣā'ifah (pl. *ṣawā'if*): a summer raid against the Byzantine Empire.

ṣakk (pl. *ṣikāk*): a document of authorization.

ṣalibī: a full-blooded Arab.

sāqah: the army's rear.

sardāq: a pavilion.

sawīq: barley-mush.

ṣawlajān: the game of polo.

shākirīyah (sing. *shākirī*): personal attendant or bodyguard.

shalīl: a garment worn under a coat of mail. Cf. *ghilālāh*.

sharī'ah: Islamic Law.

shāṭiyah (pl. *shawāṭī*): a winter raid against the Byzantine Empire.

shiyah (pl. *shiyā*): a marking.

sikkah (pl. *sikak*): a postal stage.

ṣilah: a grant.

siwār (pl. *asāwir*): a golden neck chain.

sūdān: black slaves, especially from sub-Saharan West Africa.

ṣulḥ: a peace treaty.

sunnah: the model behaviour of the Prophet.

t

ṭabar or *ṭabarazīn*: a battle-axe.

ta'biyah: mobilization for battle; ranking an army in proper position for battle.

taḥliyah: a distinguishing feature.

tajfāf (pl. *tajāfāf*): a coat of mail or cuirass placed upon a horse.

takbīr: the exclamation 'Allah is great'.

ṭalī'ah: a daytime scouting party.

tanāhud: contributions given by the troops toward the expenses of the campaign they are take in it.

ṭawq (pl. *aṭwāq*): a golden bracelet.

thaghr (pl. *thughūr*): border area.

tillīṣah: a horse's feed-basket made of palm leaves.

turjumān: a translator.

turs: an iron shield.

u

'ulamā' (sing. *'alim*): scholars in general, including jurists, especially Qur'ān interpreters and theologians.

ummahāt al-mu'minīn: the Prophet's widows.

W

wahaq: a lasso.

wālī (pl. *wulāī*): a provincial governor.

walī al-‘ahd: a heir apparent.

Z

zahf: repeated advance in straight, unbroken rows.

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